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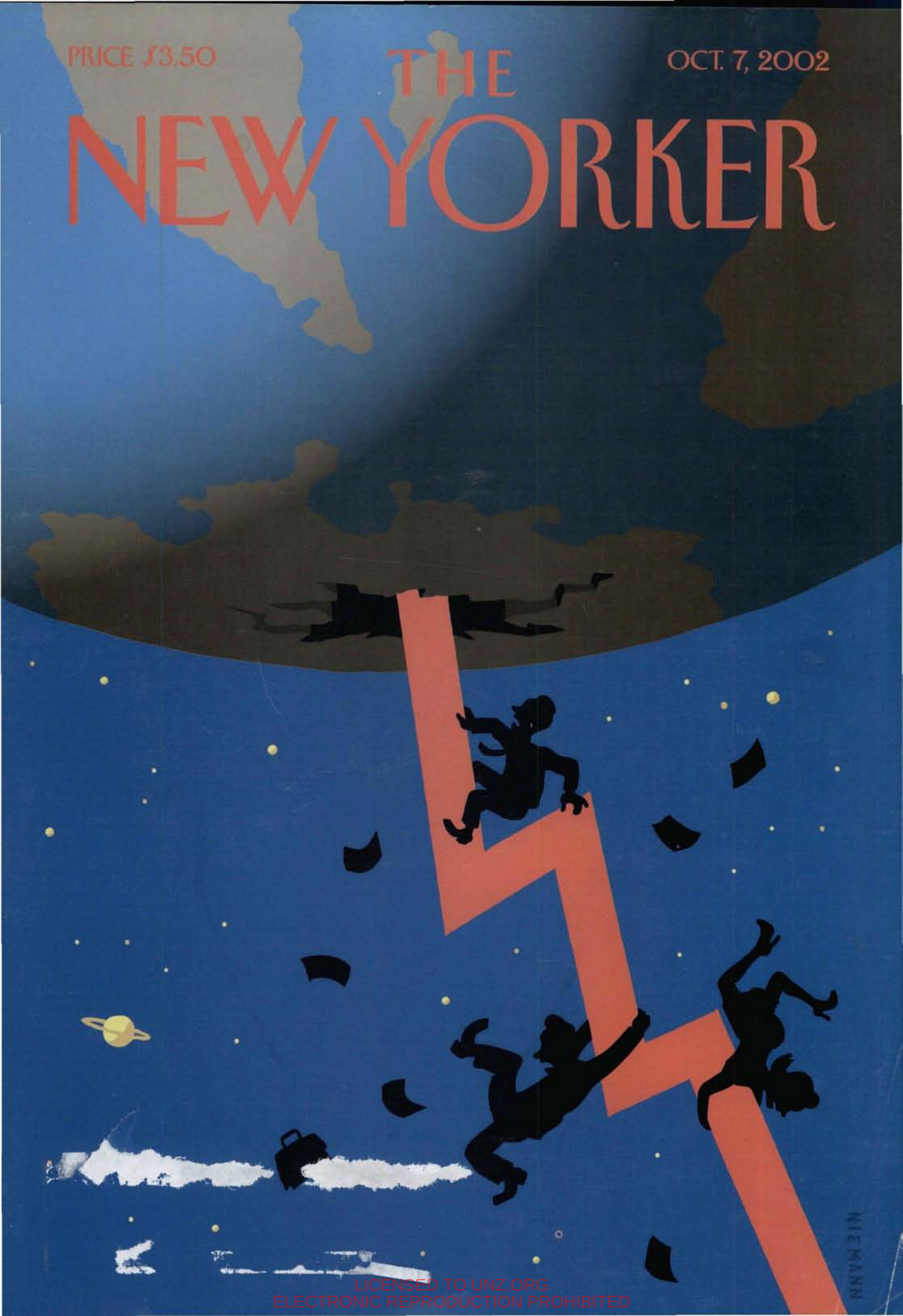
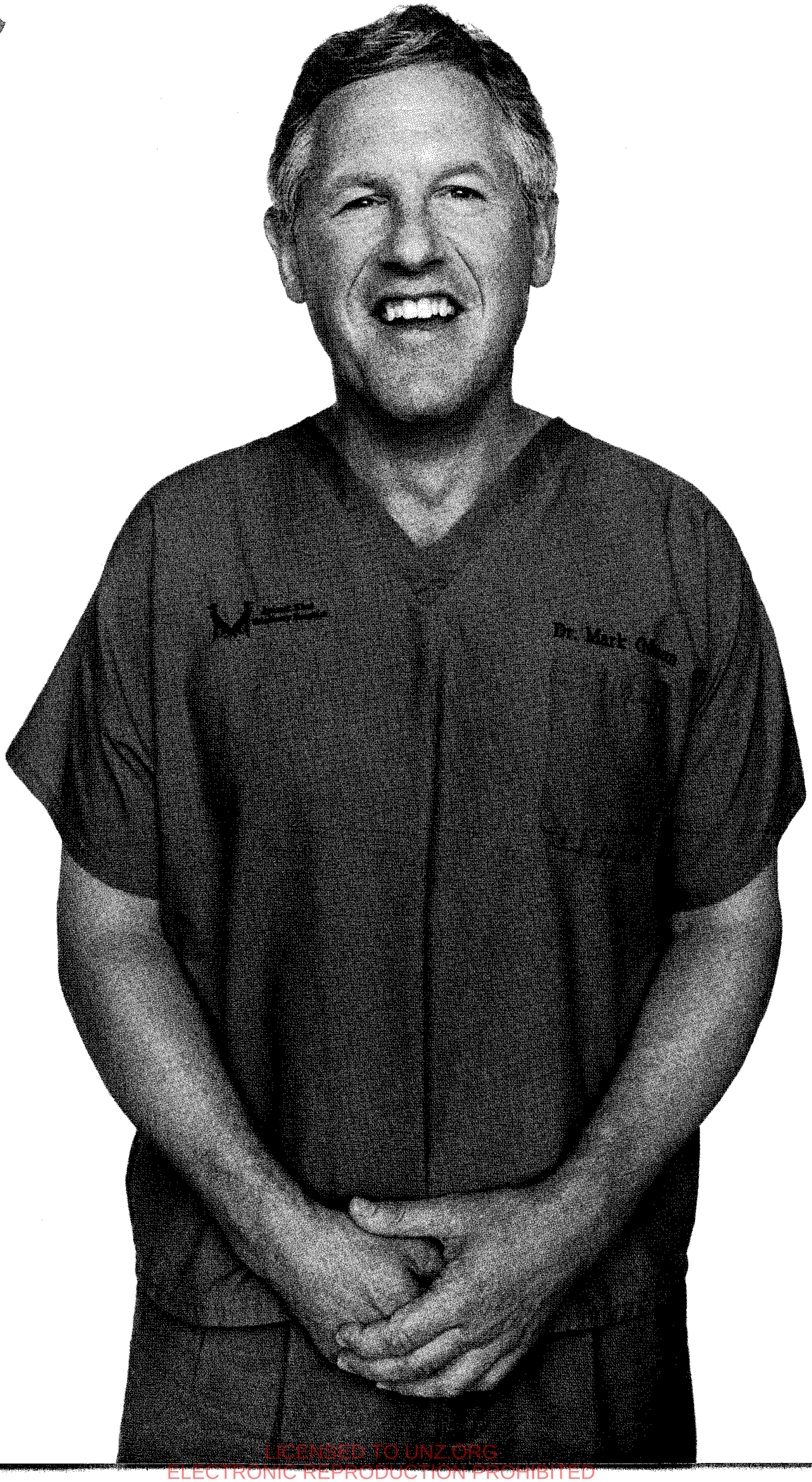
THE NEW YORKER

OCT. 7, 2002

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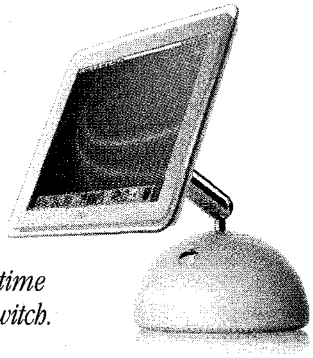

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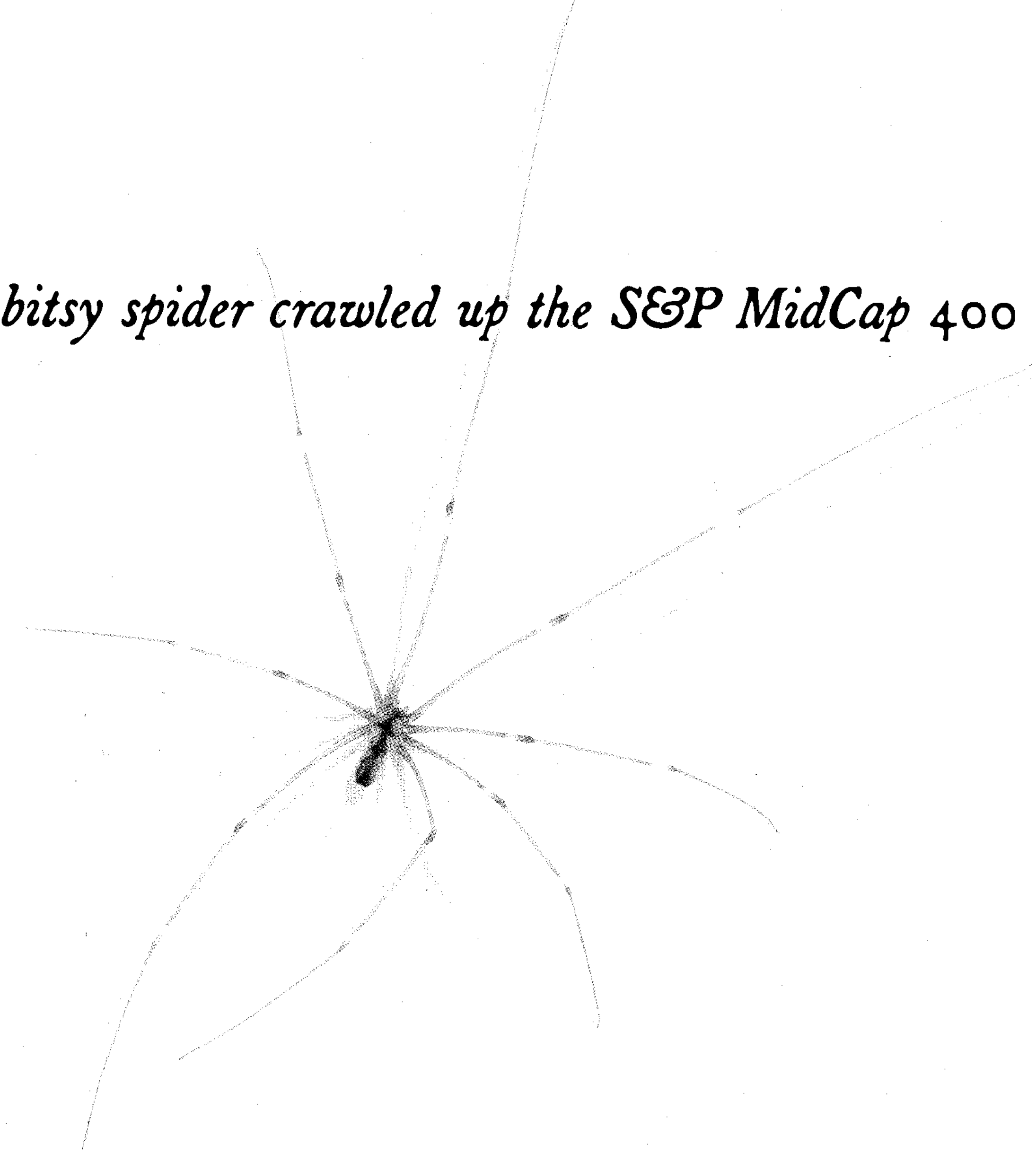

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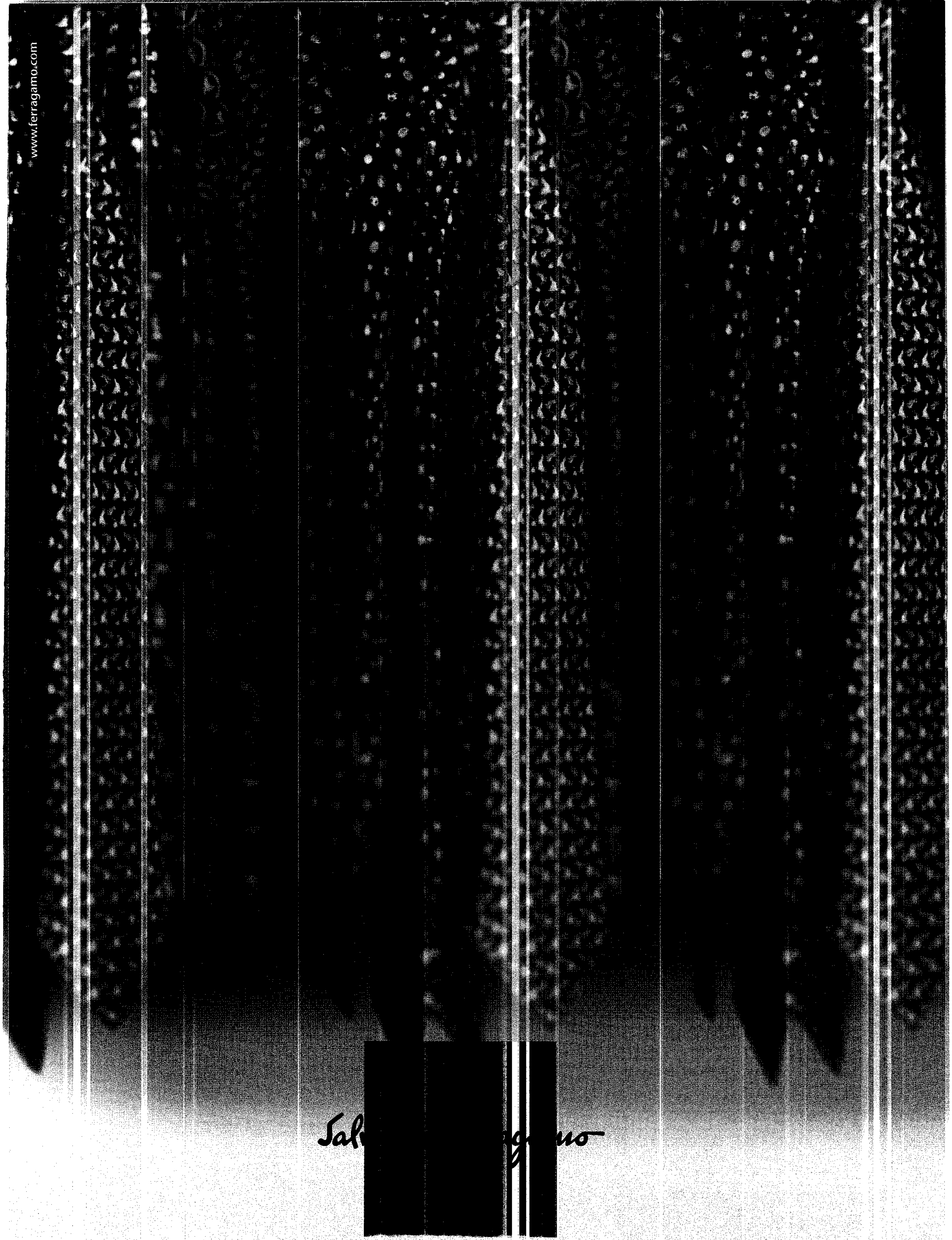
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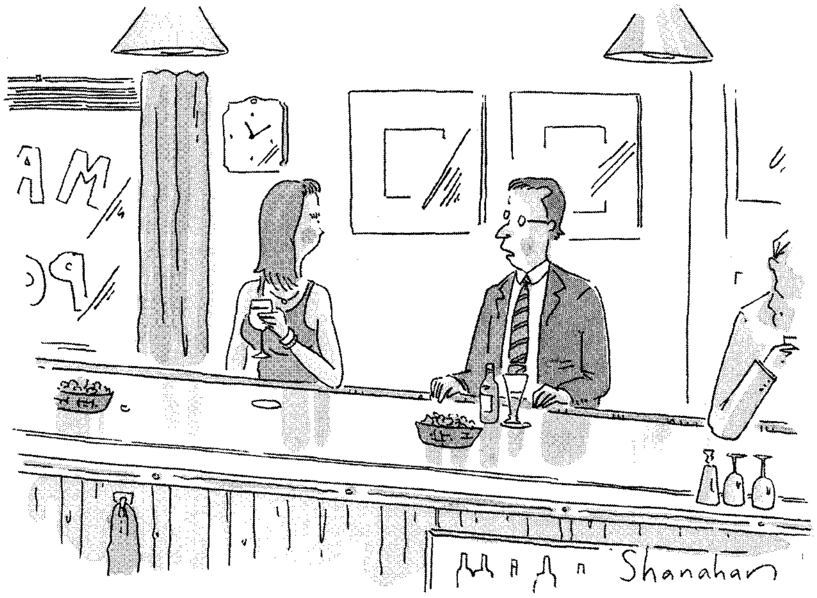

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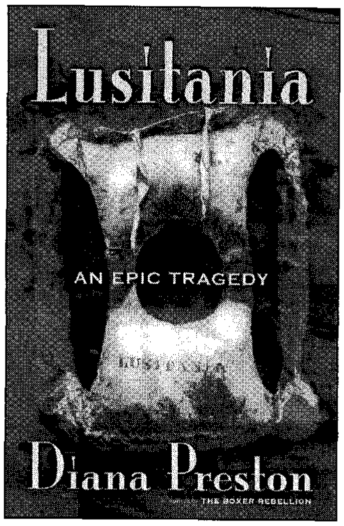

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WAR AND TERROR

In their Comment on the Iraq situation (The Talk of the Town, September 16th), David Remnick and Hendrik Hertzberg write that "to reason why, to ask that the case be made before committing our blood to the battlefield, is not a failure of nerve. It's simple patriotism"—words that recall Pericles' famous observation about the Athenians that "we do not think that there is an incompatibility between words and deeds; the worst thing is to rush into action before the consequences have been properly debated." Thucydides places Pericles' noble speech at an early point in his account of the Peloponnesian War. Not long afterward, however, he evokes a terrifyingly different state of mind, when he describes the factionalism that soon erupted on both sides of the conflict: "To think of the future and wait was merely another way of saying one was a coward; any idea of moderation was just an attempt to disguise one's unmanly character; ability to understand a question from all sides meant that one was totally unfitted for action." Both passages, and the ease with which the discourse moved from one to the other, are worth remembering now.
David H. Porter
Saratoga Springs, N.Y.

Remnick and Hertzberg write of the need to behave rationally in our pursuit of justice for the September 11th perpetrators. They then begin the next paragraph with a discussion of a possible war with Iraq. Therein lies the problem. How does one get—logically, politically, morally—from September 11th to an attack on Iraq? One wishes for a transition, or a cross-fade, but, so far, all the public has been given is a jump cut from New York to Baghdad. In the real world, we need a solid bridge, with evidence and an explanation. If the President has found one, he has not yet shared it; without it, the troops and tanks that cross that divide, in the eyes of much of the world, will be the aggressors.
Phil Sheehan
Schenectady, N.Y.

Louis Menand, assessing recent books and essays on what the U.S. should learn from September 11th (A Critic at Large, September 16th), states that the attacks were, on some level, "just a consequence of participating in global affairs at all." There is a great deal of unjustified anti-Americanism abroad, but the suggestion that the U.S. should expect hatred no matter how it conducts a non-isolationist foreign policy is surely false. For largely geopolitical reasons, though often in the name of democracy and human rights, the U.S. has supported anti-democratic, authoritarian, and often repressive regimes (as in Chile, South Africa, Iran, and, yes, Saddam Hussein's Iraq). It is worth asking whether a foreign policy with true moral authority, dedicated to advancing human rights and democratic aspirations, might have resulted in an effective marginalization of the zealots who carried out this terrible atrocity.
Samuel C. Rickless
San Diego, Calif.

Menand makes it clear that America doesn't need self-flagellation (Noam Chomsky, Gore Vidal) or back-patting (Dinesh D'Souza, William Bennett). But what we do need is a book like John Maynard Keynes's "The Economic Consequences of the Peace" (1919). Keynes did not attempt a sociopolitical analysis of Britain, its allies, or its enemies. He certainly did not try to justify the German ultra-nationalism that led to Nazism. He just warned that the economic conditions imposed on Germany by the Versailles Treaty would cause serious trouble. People today demand a chance at economic opportunity, and their frustration often leads to irrational violence. Where is our Keynes to analyze the consequences of oil politics, or of globalization?
John M. Pickering
Albuquerque, N.M.

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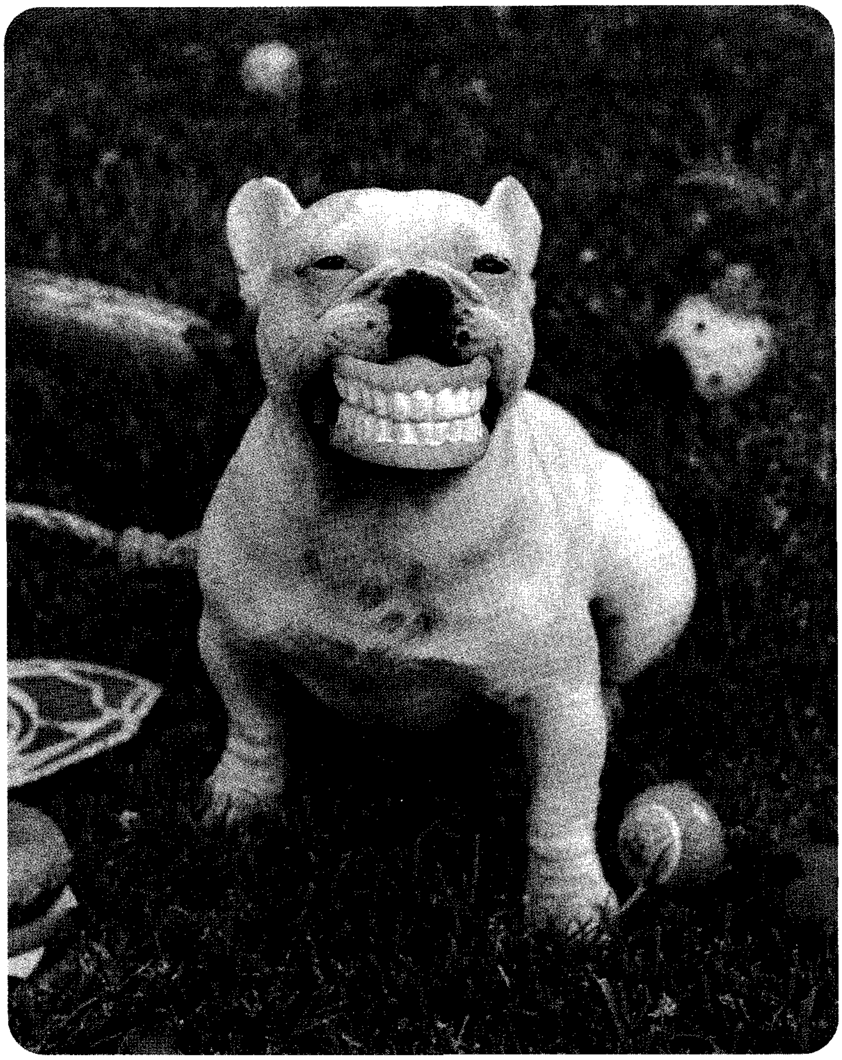

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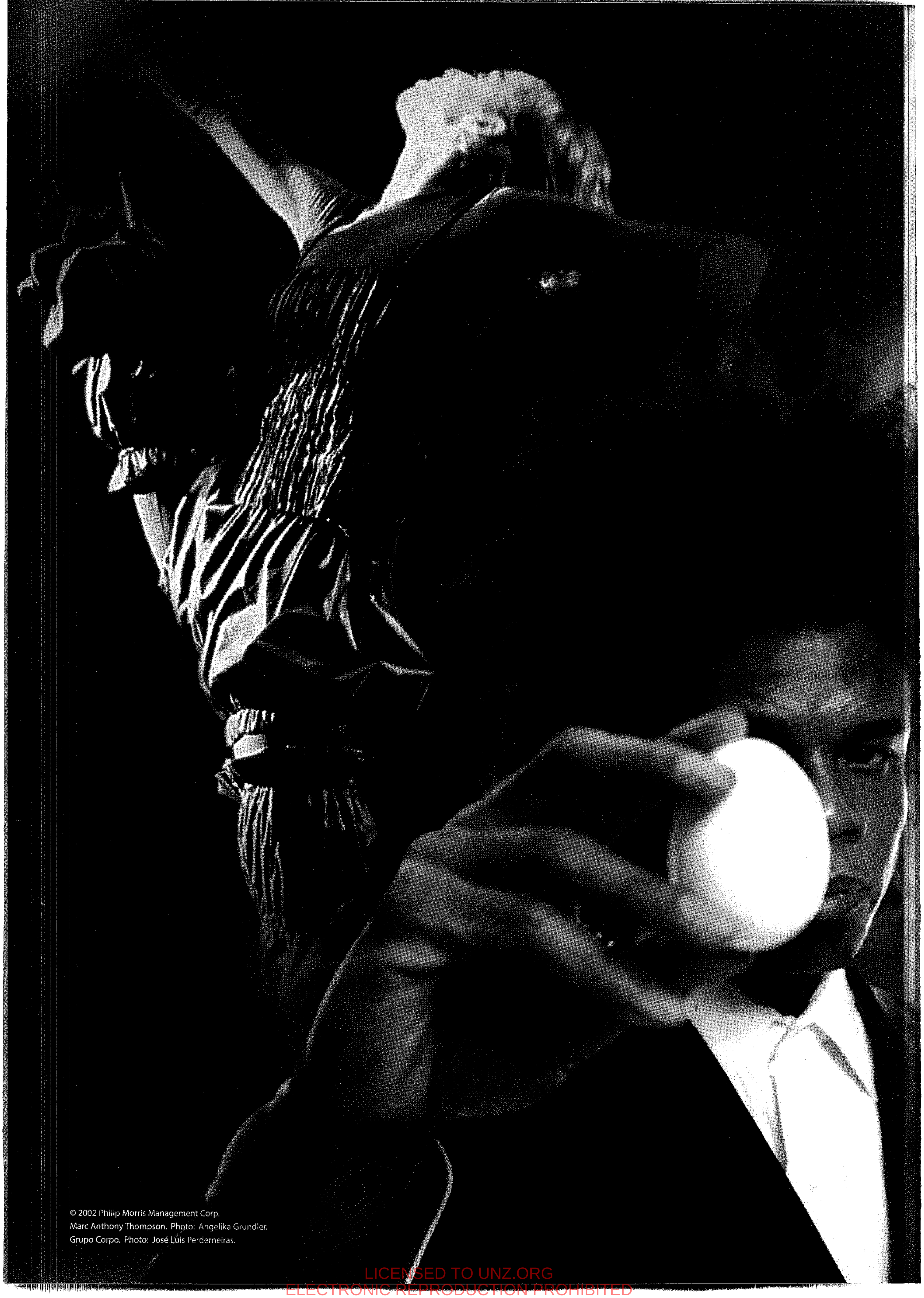

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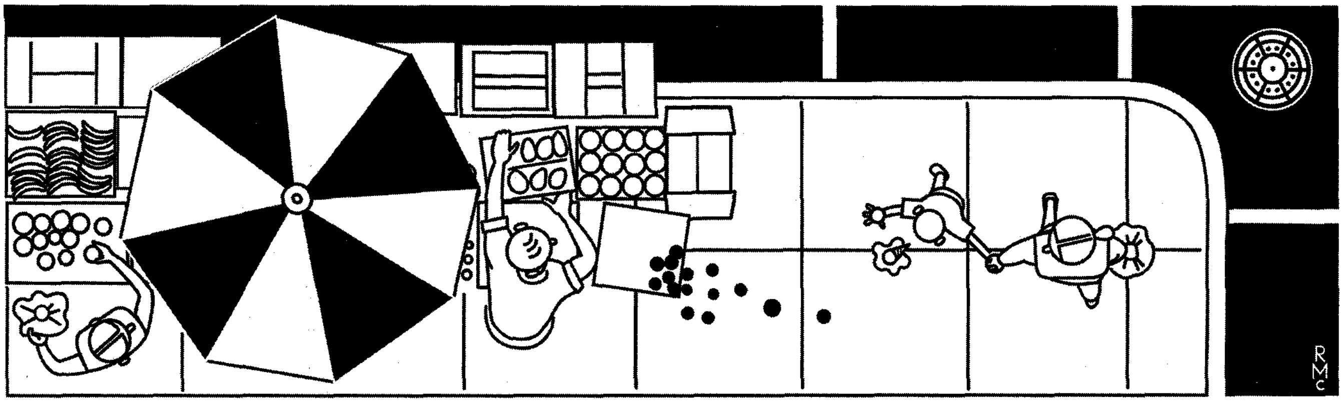

THE THEATRE
OPENINGS & PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

AMOUR
James Lapine directs Malcolm Gets and Melissa Errico in a new musical by Michel Legrand (score) and Didier van Cauwelaert (book and lyrics), based on Jeremy Sams's translation of the short story "Le Passe-Muraille," by Marcel Aymé. In previews. (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

BAILEGANGAIRE
The Irish Repertory Theatre's staging of Tom Murphy's play stars Pauline Flanagan as a senile woman who never reaches the end of her nightly retelling of a yarn about a local laughing contest. In previews. (132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737.)

BETTY RULES
An autobiographical pop-rock musical chronicling the ups and downs in the career of the girl band Betty (Alyson Palmer, Amy Ziff, and Elizabeth Ziff). Michael Greif ("Rent") is the director. In previews. (Zipper, 336 W. 37th St. 239-6200.)

BURNING BLUE
A fatal accident involving three F-18 jets is at the center of this drama by D. M. W. Greer. Chad Lowe leads the cast. In previews. (Samuel Beckett, 410 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

CATCALL
A documentary-style play about the desperate mating ritual, by Rebeca Ramirez, staged by the Queen's Company. Previews begin Oct. 8. (Connelly Theatre, 220 E. 4th St. 206-1515.)

THE CHARITY THAT BEGAN AT HOME
The Mint Theatre's staging of St. John Hankin's 1906 comedy about a family of unremitting do-gooders. In previews through Oct. 6. Opens Oct. 7 at 7. (311 W. 43rd St. 315-0231.)

DEBBIE DOES DALLAS
Sherie Rene Scott has the title role, in a stage adaptation, written by Erica Schmidt, of the, um, classic film. Previews begin Oct. 8. (Jane Street Theatre, 113 Jane St. 239-6200.)

DEFENDING THE CAVEMAN
Rob Becker returns to New York for a brief engagement in his one-man comedy about male-female relationships. Previews begin Oct. 8. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 307-4100.)

THE EXONERATED
Jessica Blank and Erik Jensen interviewed forty former death-row prisoners for their play about six people imprisoned for crimes they did not commit. Sara Gilbert and Richard Dreyfuss are in the cast. In previews. (45 Bleecker Street Theatre, 45 Bleecker St. 307-4100.)

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FLOWER DRUM SONG
A revival of the 1958 Rodgers and Hammerstein musical, starring Lea Salonga and directed by Robert Longbottom, with a new book by David Henry Hwang. In previews. (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200.)

HOLLYWOOD ARMS
Linda Lavin, Michele Pawk, and Frank Wood lead the cast in a play based on Carol Burnett's memoir of her childhood, written by Ms. Burnett and her daughter Carrie Hamilton. Harold Prince is the director. Previews begin Oct. 7. (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

IN REAL LIFE
Charlayne Woodard's latest autobiographical one-woman show. In previews through the Oct. 6 matinée. Opens Oct. 8 at 7:30. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

A MAN OF NO IMPORTANCE
Roger Rees and Faith Prince star in a musical by Terrence McNally (book), Stephen Flaherty (music), and Lynn Ahrens (lyrics), based on the 1994 movie, set in Dublin in the sixties, about a middle-aged, closeted bus driver who gets into trouble when he proposes Wilde's "Salomé" as his church troupe's next theatrical production. Joe Mantello is the director. In previews. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

MA RAINEY'S BLACK BOTTOM
August Wilson's 1984 play, in a Classical Theatre of Harlem staging. Previews begin Oct. 2. (Harlem School of the Arts, 645 St. Nicholas Ave., near 141st St. 206-1515.)

MEDEA
Dublin's Abbey Theatre returns to the Brooklyn Academy of Music with Deborah Warner's staging of the Euripides play, starring Fiona Shaw. Opens Oct. 2 at 7:30. (BAM's Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100.)

MOVIN' OUT
Twyla Tharp's dance-musical, based on the songs of Billy Joel. In previews. (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

MY OLD LADY
Israel Horovitz's latest play stars Peter Friedman as a man who inherits a Paris apartment, only to find that it is occupied by a ninety-year-old woman (Siân Phillips) and her daughter (Jan Maxwell). David Esbjornson is the director. In previews. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 239-6200.)

THE RESISTIBLE RISE OF ARTURO UI
Al Pacino leads a cast that includes Steve Buscemi, Billy Crudup, Charles Durning, Linda Emond, John Goodman, Chazz Palminteri, and Tony Randall, in a National Actors Theatre staging of Brecht's comic parable about the rise of Hitler. Simon McBurney is the director. Previews begin Oct. 3. (Pace Downtown Theatre, Spruce St. between Nassau and Gold Sts. 239-6280.)

SAY GOODNIGHT, GRACIE
Frank Gorshin portrays George Burns, in a one-man show about the comic's life, written by Rupert Holmes. John Tillinger is the director. In previews. (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

YELLOWMAN
Dael Orlandersmith stars in her own drama, about the complicated relationship between a dark-skinned black woman and a light-skinned black man (Howard W. Overshown). In previews. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

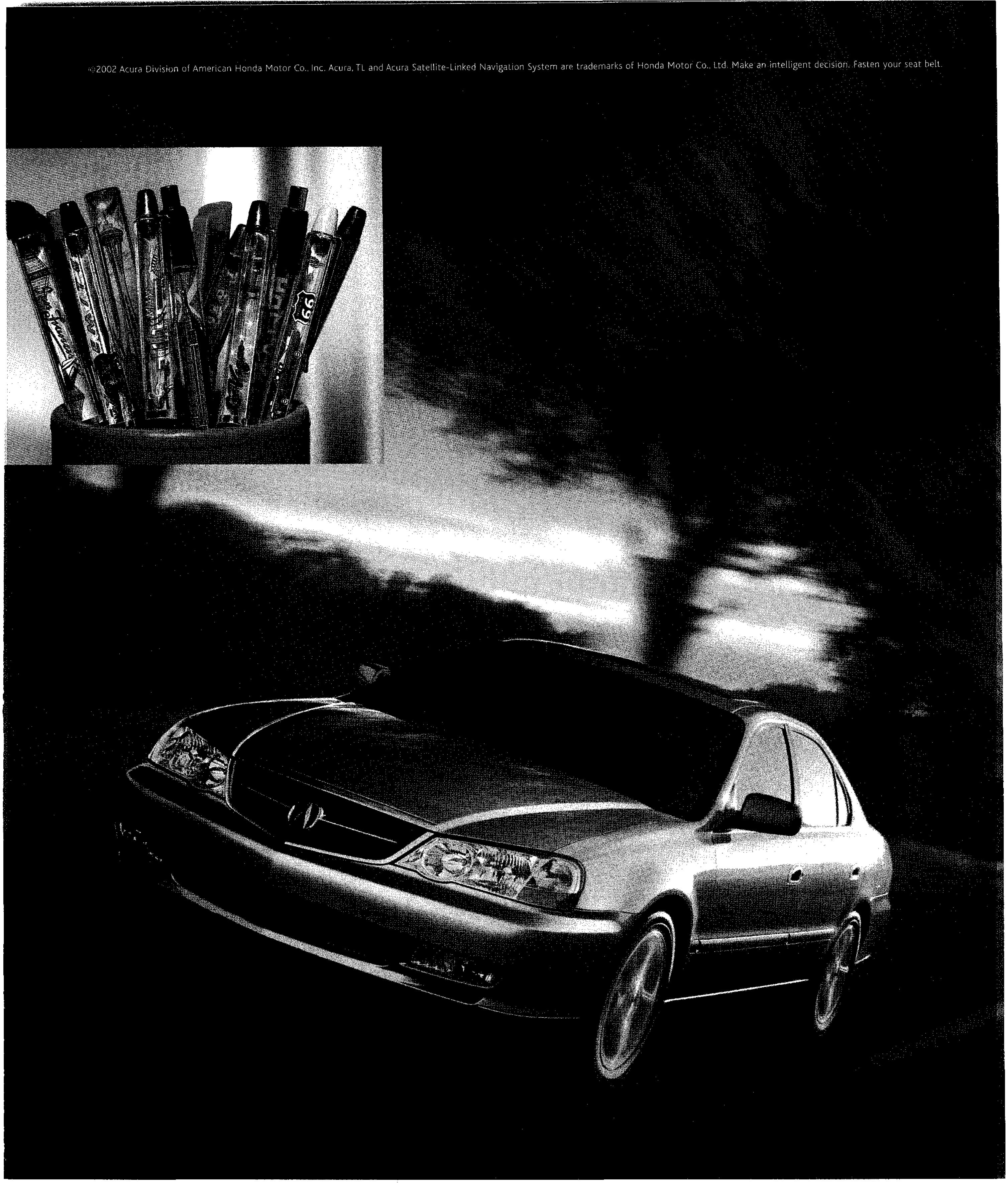
OPENED RECENTLY

THE BOYS FROM SYRACUSE
This Roundabout Theatre revival of the 1938 Rodgers and Hart comedy based on Shakespeare's "Comedy of Errors" has a new book by Nicky Silver, based on George Abbot's original script—and something has been lost in translation. Rather than perked up, the show feels freighted by the update. Scott Ellis's direction and Martin Pakledinaz's costumes have Looney Tunes written all over them. The resulting hybrid of humor brings to mind the broad, silly, knowing farce that Carol Burnett's company patented in the seventies, which hasn't aged well, either. Rodgers and Hart's songs are timeless, and the game cast renders them well, but that's still not a good enough reason to sit through everything else. (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 719-1300. Closes Oct. 20.)

BURN THIS
Catherine Keener and Edward Norton lead the cast in a Signature Theatre Company revival of Lanford Wilson's 1987 drama. (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 307-4100.)

THE BUTTER AND EGG MAN
George S. Kaufman's 1925 comedy about a Midwesterner who moves to New York to have a go at the theatre business, in an Atlantic Theatre Company revival. John Ellison Conlee, Julie Halston, Tom Mardirosian, and Michael McGrath are in the cast. (336 W. 20th St. 239-6200.)

CALL THE CHILDREN HOME
A musical set in a brothel in New Orleans at the beginning of the twentieth century, written by the



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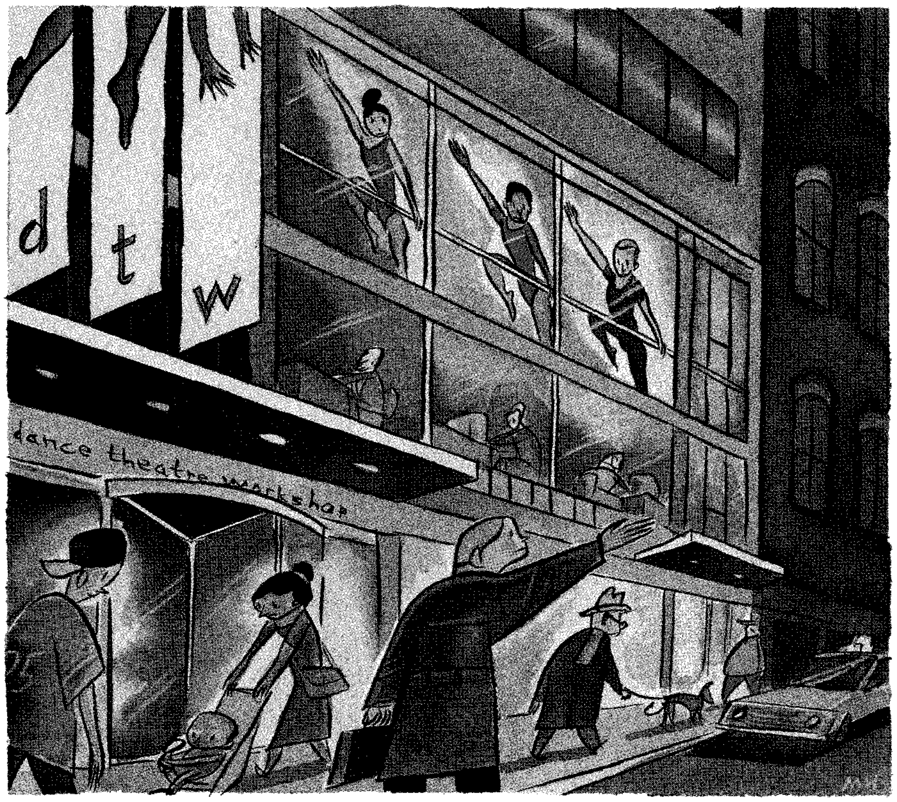
late Thomas Babe (book) and Mildred Kayden (music and lyrics). (Primary Stages, 354 W. 45th St. 333-4052.)

THE COMEDY OF ERRORS
In the Aquila Theatre Company's excellent production of Shakespeare's intricately foolish story, the laughs are many and the delights deep. The seven cast members, led here by Mark Saturno and Louis Butelli as the two sets of twins, mix remarkable range with insane energy. (Harold Clurman, 412 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

CONNECTIONS
A newly divorced man experiments with Internet dating, in a romantic comedy by Vernon Church. (Theatre for the New City, 155 First Ave., near 10th St. 206-1515.)

THE DARK KALAMAZOO
The Drama Dept. opens the season with an autobiographical one-woman show by Oni Faida Lampley, about making her first trip to Africa at nineteen. (Greenwich House, 27 Barrow St. 633-9632.)



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ENDPAPERS
The first full-length play by Thomas McCormack, the retired C.E.O. of an independently owned publishing house (St. Martin's), about choosing a successor as C.E.O. of an independently owned publishing house, is highly literate (imagine: grammar jokes!) and full of zingy one-liners. (Variety Arts, Third Ave. at 14th St. 239-6200.)

EVOLUTION
A morality play by Jonathan Marc Sherman, about an academic studying Charles Darwin who is offered a job in the entertainment industry. Josh Hamilton, Keira Naughton, Peter Dinklage, and Ione Skye are in the cast. (45 Bleecker Street Theatre, 45 Bleecker St. 260-3750. Closes Oct. 13.)

FRANKIE AND JOHNNY IN THE CLAIR DE LUNE
The brilliant Edie Falco's star turn in Terence McNally's sentimental two-character study about a man and a woman marginalized by life while struggling to embrace it is the best reason to see this derivative work, which owes a great deal to William Inge. The play is a surface crowd-pleaser, and Tucci's strident surface charm works perfectly with it, but Falco's steady reasonableness, even in Frankie's moments of panic, shows up both Tucci and the play. With this performance, she joins the ranks of Laurette Taylor and Shirley Booth: great American actresses who garner audience sympathy through lyrical naturalism. Joe Mantello is the director. (Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

THE GRADUATE
This pointless production is endless and full of dead air. There are exactly two pleasures here: Victor Slezak, as Mr. Robinson, and Murphy Guyer, as Benjamin's father; they depict beautifully the anger and anxiety that underlie their postwar poolside bonhomie. (Reviewed in our issue of 4/15/02.) (Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

THE GUYS
A dialogue between a fire captain who lost eight of his men on September 11th and an editor who helps him prepare their eulogies, written by Anne Nelson, a journalist, and directed by Jim Simpson, the Flea Theatre's artistic director. It's an artful and moving re-creation of the relationships New Yorkers formed as a result of that day—of the way that people "jumped tracks" and suddenly saw into each other's lives—and an admirable tribute to the men who died. (The Flea, 41 White St. 206-1515.)

HAIRSPRAY
This musical-comedy version of the 1988 John Waters movie, with a book by Mark O'Donnell and Thomas Meehan, a score by Marc Shaiman, and lyrics by Shaiman and Scott Wittman, takes off from the opening number and never loses its momentum. In Baltimore in 1962, the rotund teen Tracy Turnblad (Marissa Jaret Winokur) wants to dance, make out with the best-looking boy in town, and integrate "The Corny Collins Show," a local teen-dance TV program. David Rockwell's sets and William Ivey Long's costumes combine and highlight the period artifacts in an ecstasy of gorgeous bad taste, offered with just enough invention to achieve lyrical wit. What the show is parodying was trivial to begin with, so the parodies don't sting—they're not meant to. Instead they break free into some goofy new realm of pop Dada. With the great Harvey Fierstein, plucked, shaved, and padded, as Tracy's mother, Edna Turnblad, a housewife who takes in laundry but who gets to appear, at the climax of the show, in flaming pink. Jack O'Brien is the director. (9/2/02) (Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100.)

HAPPY DAYS
Joseph Chaikin directs Beckett's play at the theatre in which it premièred, in New York in 1961. With Joyce Aaron as Winnie and Ron Faber as Willie. (Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St. 239-6200.)

HARLEM SONG
Essentially a revue, using both old and new compositions, selected or written by the director George C. Wolfe and the show's talented music supervisors, Zane Mark and Daryl Waters. Like Alice Walker's "The Color Purple" and the novels of Terry McMillan, it is a form of art whose aesthetic concerns are secondary to its desire to make "the people" feel good, about themselves and their community. The Harlem of "Harlem Song" is not an urban wasteland in the process of reinventing itself. It is a realm of legend and lore, and a mythical homeland, which it is our duty as theatregoers, as citizens, to celebrate. This is a point worth making, but not one that bears much repeating. (8/19 & 26/02) (Apollo Theatre, 253 W. 125th St. 307-7171.)

INTO THE WOODS
Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine's 1987 fairy-tale-derived musical isn't so much a rethinking of fairy tales as it is a parable about growing up and finding your place in the community, and about learning to live with uncertainty and ambivalence. The archetypal material is treated with suitable directness and simplicity, and yet the show lacks none of the intelligence or emotional honesty we expect from Sondheim. Mr. Lapine is the director. (5/13/02) (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

JOLSON AND COMPANY
A musical about the life of the early show-biz superstar, written by Stephen Mo Hanan (who portrays Jolson) and Jay Berkow. (Century Center, 111 E. 15th St. 239-6200.)

JULIUS CAESAR
The experimental Access Theatre Company's staging of Shakespeare's play, adapted and directed by Randy Sharp. (One Sheridan Sq. 807-9300.)

LITTLE HAM
An encore staging of a musical based on the Langston Hughes play of the same name, which was staged last fall by the Amas Musical Theatre. It has music by Judd Woldin, lyrics by Richard Engquist and Mr. Woldin, and a book by Dan Owens. (Reviewed in this issue.) (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

THE MAYOR'S LIMO
A comedy by Mark Nassar ("Tony n' Tina's Wedding"), about a homeless man who finds himself at the center of a political war after he unwittingly urinates on the mayor's car during a demonstration. (Kraine, 85 E. 4th St. 352-3101.)

PETER AND VANDY
A cinéma-vérité take on the relationship of two young lovers written by Jay DiPietro, who also stars and directs. (Paradise, 64 E. 4th St. 206-1515. Closes Oct. 12.)

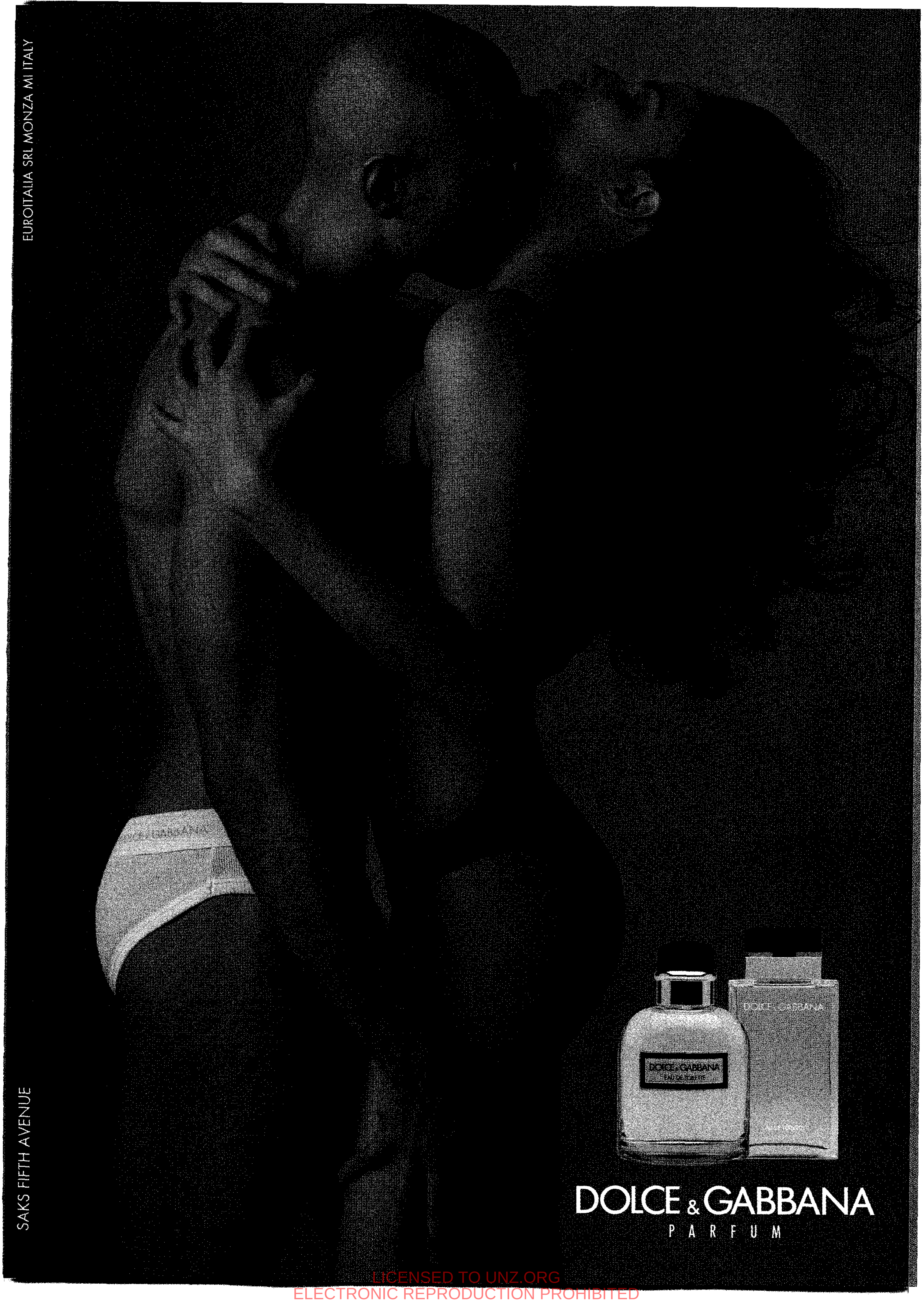
THE PRINCE AND THE PAUPER
Mark Twain's novel has been adapted for the stage and musicalized by Neil Berg (score and lyrics) and Bernie Garza and Ray Roderick (book). (Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

RICKY JAY: ON THE STEM
The master magician's tribute to the flimflammery and weird entertainments that have cropped up over the years along the length of Broadway, "the stem that winds the watch" of New York City. Prepare to be happily hornswoggled. Directed by David Mamet. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 246-4422.)

ROMAN NIGHTS
The long friendship between Tennessee Williams and Anna Magnani is the subject of a new play by Franco D'Alessandro. (DR2, 103 E. 15th St. 239-6200.)

SHE STOOPS TO CONQUER
A Pearl Theatre Company production of Oliver Goldsmith's 1773 comedy. (80 St. Marks Pl. 598-9802.)

SPLIT
Michael Weller's comic drama about the breakup of a "perfect" couple. (Lion, 410 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)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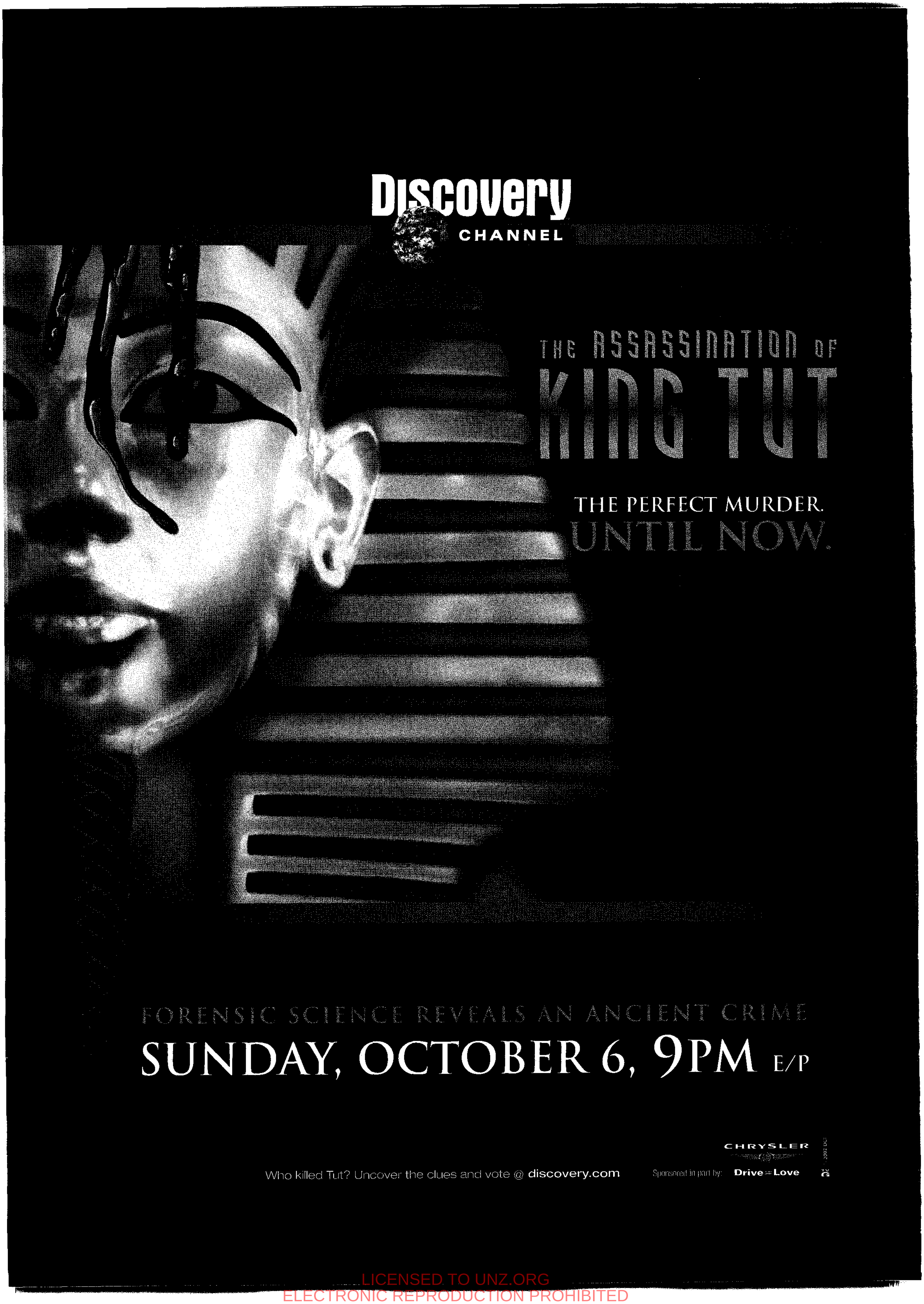

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TV G

TAKE ME OUT
From London's Donmar Warehouse, a new play by Richard Greenberg, in which a heroic baseball player comes out to the press. Joe Mantello is the director. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 239-6200.)

THOROUGHLY MODERN MILLIE
Just like the 1967 movie it's based on, this musical is supposed to be all madcap Jazz Age fizziness, but the harder the cast sings and dances, the flatter the enterprise falls. The colors seem garish rather than gay, the manic energy feels forced at gunpoint, and the only thing you recall about Sutton Foster's Millie after you leave the theatre is her huge white teeth and bouncy black bob. Call it thoroughly boring, shrilly. (Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.)

THE WORLD OVER
Playwrights Horizons kicks off the season with a new play by Keith Bunin, about a young man who believes he is the lost prince of a mythical kingdom. (The Duke, 229 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

LONG RUNS

AIDA
Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4747.

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST
Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 307-4747.

BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES
Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370.

CABARET
Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 239-6200.

CHICAGO
Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200.

THE COMPLETE WORKS OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (ABRIDGED)
Century Center, 111 E. 15th St. 239-6200.

DE LA GUARDA
Daryl Roth, 20 Union Sq. E., at 15th St. 239-6200.

FORBIDDEN BROADWAY: 20TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION
Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.

42ND STREET
Ford Center, 213 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.

THE GOAT; OR, WHO IS SYLVIA
Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200.

I LOVE YOU, YOU'RE PERFECT, NOW CHANGE
Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.

THE LION KING
New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.

LOVE, JANIS
Village Theatre, 158 Bleecker St. 307-4100.

MAMMA MIA!
Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 563-5544.

METAMORPHOSES
Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200.

LES MISÉRABLES
Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200.

OKLAHOMA!
Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.

PERFECT CRIME
Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401.

THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200.

THE PRODUCERS
St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.

PROOF
Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.

PUPPETRY OF THE PENIS
John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.

RENT
Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000.

STOMP
Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at 8th St. 477-2477.

TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING
St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200.

UNDERNEATH THE LINTEL
Soho Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 239-6200.

URINETOWN
Henry Miller, 124 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.

THE VAGINA MONOLOGUES
Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.

DANCE

MOMIX
The company opens the Joyce's fall season with two full-length programs presented during a three-week run. This week, they perform both works: "Opus Cactus," their celebration of the Sonoran Desert, and "MOMIX in Orbit," a medley of repertory excerpts. (175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Oct. 1-4 at 8, Oct. 5 at 2 and 8, and Oct. 6 at 2 and 7:30. Through Oct. 13.)

"WALKING OUT THE DARK"
In Dance Theatre Workshop's former performance space, the ceilings were so low that tall dancers worried about bonking their heads when they jumped. Now, in the organization's bright new building—with its solid front of windows inviting passersby to gawk at rehearsals on the third floor, administrative affairs on the second, and theatregoers boozing it up at ground level—the theatre could house a whole circus, including high-flying trapeze. But for its first, mesmerizing offering, by Ronald K. Brown, the four dancers stick close to the ground. "Walking Out the Dark" begins with the punctuated rhythm, fierce precision, and declamatory heat of a fraught conversation between intimates. One dancer's eyes stay glued to another's as he flutters his hips back and forth like a delicate question or collapses onto his back, arms overhead in a guileless exclamation of surrender. The dance ends on a high note, with a New Guinea celebration number—the kind of dancing that Brown says "people do when they're travelling together toward bliss." (219 W. 19th St. 924-0077. Oct. 2-5 at 7 and Oct. 6 at 2. Through Oct. 20.)

"THE JUNEBUG SYMPHONY"
The show's creator and principal performer, James Thiérrée, grew up in a tent, he says, after his parents ran away to the circus (they brought him along). He began his circus duties when he was still a wee tot, as a prop in their hands. As if that weren't enough, Charlie Chaplin was his grandfather. "I should have been an accountant," he says. "Now, that would have been exotic." Instead, he did the normal thing and learned to fly on the trapeze, clown with delicate ease or sudden rambunctiousness, and play haunting violin while skimming the ground on roller skates—all of which comes into play in this feather-light symphony of things (and four people) going bump in the night. "The show is very simple," Thiérrée says. "It is made of imagination and good will." (New Victory Theatre, 209 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. Oct. 3-4 at 7, Oct. 5 at 1 and 7, and Oct. 6 at 3. Through Oct. 13.)

GINA GIBNEY DANCE
The choreographer collaborates with the composer Kitty Brazelton on "Time Remaining," an evening-length work inspired by an image of temple ruins covered in vines. (Danspace Project, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. Oct. 5-6 and Oct. 8 at 8:30.)

"RIP IT OPEN"
Maura Donohue thinks her last couple of productions, delicate Butoh-style works she often performed in the nude, were trying too hard to be good. "They had this one-world, uplift thing going on," she says. "I was performing what I wanted to feel, not what I did feel." So, taking courage from such liberating embarrassments as "Faster, Pussycat! Kill! Kill!" and Courtney Love, she is offering an evening of suspect taste and clashing attitudes. "Rip It Open" skips and hops from, say, a riot school-grrrl bouncing up and down on a bungee cord while begging Jesus to sock it to her to a tough-minded feminist word-slammer suddenly overcome by Hallmark sweetness. Donohue says, "It was time to get over my approval issues." (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288. Oct. 3-6 at 8:30.)

SACHIYO ITO AND COMPANY
To mark the thirtieth anniversary of her first appearance in the United States, the Kabuki dancer and her company perform "Kyo Ningyo," a Ka-

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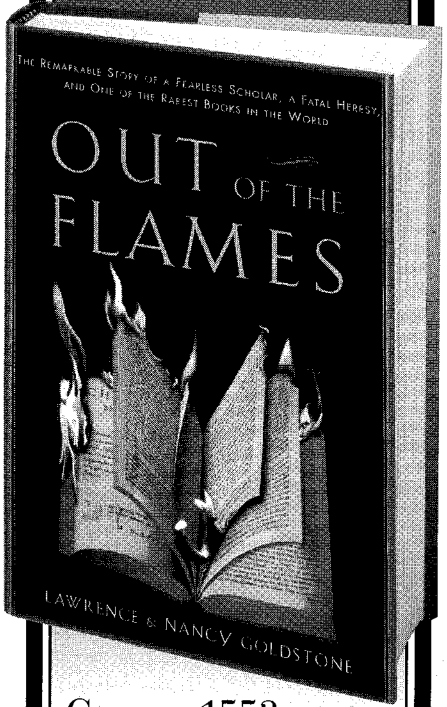
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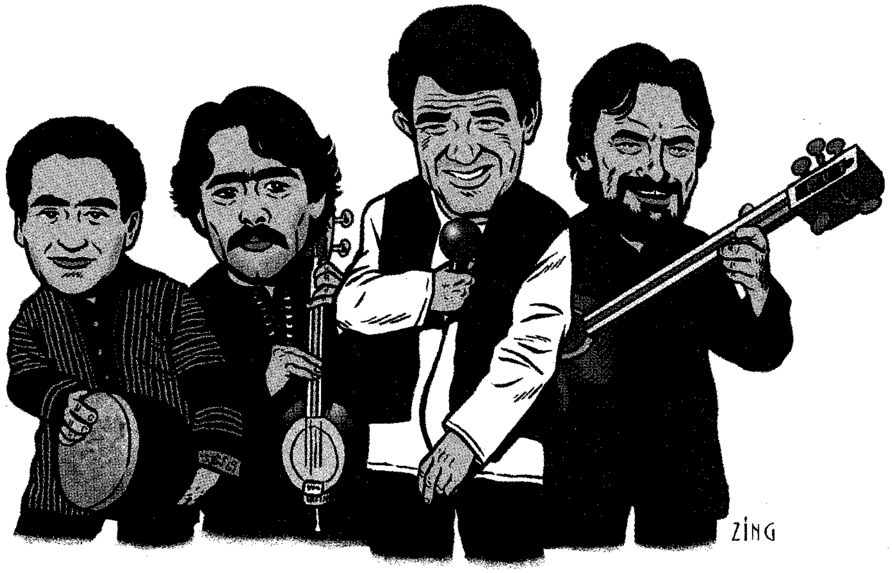
buki "Pygmalion" about a wood-carver and his doll. The program also includes Okinawan-style dances performed with the New York Sanshin Club. (Theatre of the Riverside Church, Riverside Dr. at 120th St. 870-6784. Oct. 5 at 7.)

NIGHT LIFE
CONCERTS

SINGERS OVER MANHATTAN
Two vocalists from geographically and stylistically different worlds hold court above Lincoln Center. The veteran **Mark Murphy** is steeped in the vocabulary of authentic bebop; the Chilean **Claudia Acuña** refracts standards and Latin material through a contemporary prism. (Kaplan Penthouse, Rose Building, Lincoln Center, 165 W. 65th St. 721-6500. Oct. 3-5 at 8.)

WORLD MUSIC INSTITUTE
The Masters of Persian Music tour brings together four of Iran's top musicians: the vocalist Mohammed Reza Shajarian, the *tar* (lute) virtuoso Hossein Alizadeh, the spike-fiddle master Kayhan Kalhor, and the percussionist Homayoun Shajarian (Mohammed Reza's son). Their repertoire may reach back through the centuries (a few of the compositions feature Rumi's verses), but it is also extremely up to date—improvisation and a willingness to incorporate contemporary poetry keep the music vital and alive. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. For more information, call 545-7536. Oct. 5 at 8.)



The World Music Institute presents the Masters of Persian Music, at Town Hall.

MARK ZINGARELLI

"MUSIC TO MY EARS"
Jimmy Buffett, Sheryl Crow, Don Henley, John Mellencamp, Sting, and Brian Wilson pay tribute to Timothy White, a longtime *Billboard* editor, writer, and biographer (of Bob Marley, James Taylor, and Brian Wilson) who died of a heart attack in June. (Madison Square Garden. 307-7171. Oct. 8 at 7:30.)

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

ARLENE GROCERY
95 Stanton St., between Ludlow and Orchard Sts. (358-1633)—Oct. 2: The local power-punk band **Alablaster** traffics in earnest and politically conscious rock. Oct. 4: The loose collective of sinister sophisticates in **Botanica,** the brainchild of the suave keyboardist Paul Wallfisch, share a similar aesthetic (as well as actual members) with such colorful local bands as Firewater, Gogol Bordello, and Congo Norvell. Fluctuating between energetic numbers and smokey ballads, Botanica provides the perfect soundtrack to the after-hours urban experience.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (997-4144)—Oct. 2: **Dave Wakeling,** the creative force behind the ska revivalists known as the English Beat and, later on, the Motown-flecked popsters of General Public, has a voice that is one of the most recognizable croons from the eighties New Wave.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (533-2111)—Oct. 3: The **Blind Boys of Alabama.** The tireless septuagenarian Clarence Fountain leads this pack of faithful singers, which was formed some sixty years ago at the Talladega Institute for the Deaf and Blind. If you've ever wondered what inspired James Brown, Sam Cooke, Ray Charles, and other secular stars, the gospel singer Fountain will show you the source. Oct. 4: **Girls Against Boys** and **Radio 4** add chunks of rhythm to their angular guitar assaults, rendering their music funky and punky in equal measures. Oct. 5: **Robert Walter's 20th Congress** brings in the funk. Walter tackles the Hammond organ, the Fender Rhodes, and the piano with the zeal of a street preacher. Backed by guitar, congas, and saxophone, he delivers a groovy party, along with a few surprises—he's been known to cover the Judas Priest hit "You've Got Another Thing Comin'." Oct. 7-8: **Ween.** Despite looking and behaving like a pair of wise-guy collegiate stoners who got a lucky break, this remarkably versatile duo has become legendary in alternative-rock circles. Their blend of genre-defying musical irreverence is as inventive as it is fearless.

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800) Oct. 1-2: Twenty years after their seminal début, the **Violent Femmes** are still on the road. That their smarmy acoustic rock sounds as fresh today as it did back in the Reagan era is a testament to the timeless appeal of teenage ennui and sexual angst. Oct. 3-5: **Karl Denson's Tiny Universe.** The jazz saxophonist Denson, who contributed to Lenny Kravitz's early albums (that solo on "Let Love Rule" belongs to him), was one of the founders of the early-nineties acid-jazz group the Greyboy Allstars. Since then Denson has grown increasingly funky, and with his Tiny Universe band he's turned his dedication to dance grooves into an underground success with jam-band fans across the country.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (539-8777)—Oct. 4: The ace songwriter and former Bongos front man **Richard Barone.**

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Oct. 3 and Oct. 5: The irrepressible New Orleans trumpeter, singer, and bandleader **Kermit Ruffins,** one of the founders of the ReBirth Brass Band, and his Barbecue Swingers band show a little Crescent City hospitality. Oct. 3: The enigmatic musician Chan Marshall, who goes by the name **Cat Power,** is known for her stage fright (she once performed the better part of a two-hour set while hiding behind her long brown hair) and for her eye-opening interpretive singing. On her 2000 release, "The Covers Record," she cooked up a hypnotic version of "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction." Her phrasing is so slow and the song becomes so personal (she shrewdly drops the chorus and central riff) that it's nearly impossible to recognize the Stones original.

LUXX
256 Grand St., Williamsburg. (718-599-1000)—Oct. 7: The **Hot Hot Heat,** from Victoria, British Columbia, cranks out throbbing, sharp-edged songs that leap from keyboard-driven flourishes to jumpy New Wave guitar work. The front man Steve Bays howls from the pit of his stomach, tossing off lyrics about bandages, pesticides, strangers, and other hallmarks of danger. He is saved by the music, which is entirely fresh and surprisingly danceable.

MERCURY LOUNGE
217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—Oct. 5: Toronto's **Do Make Say Think** crafts defiantly enigmatic instrumental post-rock. Sharing the bill is **Fly Pan Am,** a splinter group of one of the strangest rock bands in the world—Godspeed You Black Emperor. It features the guitarist Roger Tellier-Craig in a starring role, and it turns out angular music that is as arty as it is noisy. Oct. 6: Mekons leader **Jon Langford** returns for a solo show.

NORTHSIX
66 N. 6th St., Williamsburg (718-599-5103)—Oct. 6: When the hip-hop oddball **Mike Ladd** records in the studio, his articulate, political raps often come too close to spoken-word poetry to match the quirky and full-textured production he favors. Onstage, however, his ability to articulate rhymes with easy charm makes his live show a rare treat.

SOUTHPAW
125 Fifth Ave., Park Slope (718-230-0236)—Oct. 5: The neo-psychedelic tendencies of the Athens, Georgia, ensemble **Elf Power.** Oct. 7: **Do Make Say Think** and **Fly Pan Am** (see the Mercury Lounge).

VILLAGE UNDERGROUND
130 W. 3rd St. (777-7745)—Oct. 3: The roots-rocker **Edwin McCain**—a labelmate and fellow-townsman of Charleston's favorite sons, Hootie & the Blowfish—keeps the faith. Oct. 6: The **Hot Hot Heat** (see Luxx).

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

CARLYLE HOTEL
Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound murals, and, through Oct. 5, the magnetic "42nd Street" veteran **Christine Ebersole,** whose repertoire ranges from Judy Garland to Joni Mitchell. ♦ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, the **Loston Harris** trio holds forth through Dec. 31.

SALÓN MÉXICO
136 E. 26th St. (685-9400)—The witty and adroit pianist **Joel Forrester** settles in for a Friday-night residency at this Mexican restaurant, promising to regale all with elegant new tunes, each featuring a Latin twist.

FEINSTEIN'S AT THE REGENCY
540 Park Ave., at 61st St. (339-4095)—Through Oct. 5: **Darlene Love** and **Freda Payne.** This bill features one rock-and-roll legend and one fondly remembered one-hit-wonder, but their duo show is not a warmed-over oldies act. Both women can still sing, and they take on a host of standard, pop, R. & B., and gospel material to prove it. (A dual reading of "A Song for You" and "All in Love Is Fair" brings down the house.) An unexpected delight.

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (582-2121)—Through Oct. 6: As the producer of the 2001 album "Memphis Blood," the guitarist **Vernon Reid** brought his fellow-fretman **James (Blood) Ulmer** way back to his roots, exploring blues classics by Howlin' Wolf, Muddy Waters, and others at Sun Studios, in Memphis. A Northern reunion between these two guitarists makes explicit the affinities between Robert Johnson, Jimi Hendrix, and Ulmer's old cohort Ornette Coleman. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.**

JAZZ GALLERY
290 Hudson St., near Spring St. (242-1063)—Oct. 4: On his recordings with the dervish of a pianist **Vijay Iyer,** the alto saxophonist **Rudresh Mahanthappa** displays a visceral tone and a grab-you-by-the-collar attack that dares the listener to turn away. Mahanthappa celebrates his new release, "Black Water," by reconvening the band that recorded the album. It features the bassist **François Moutin,** the drummer **Eliot Humberto Kavee,** and Iyer, with whom he's developed a deep rapport.

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (576-2232)—Through Oct. 6: The first-call drummer **Carl Allen** takes control with his New Spirit band. Dining.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through Oct. 6: The **Brad Mehldau** trio. Who knows which Mehldau will appear at this gig: the well-behaved modern pianist who graced earlier trio recordings and made an impressive showing on Charlie Haden's new album, "American Dreams," or the postmodern bad boy who filled his latest recording, "Largo," with shocking production devices and outré playing? Probably both

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of them will show up, which is why he remains a figure to keep a steady eye on. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

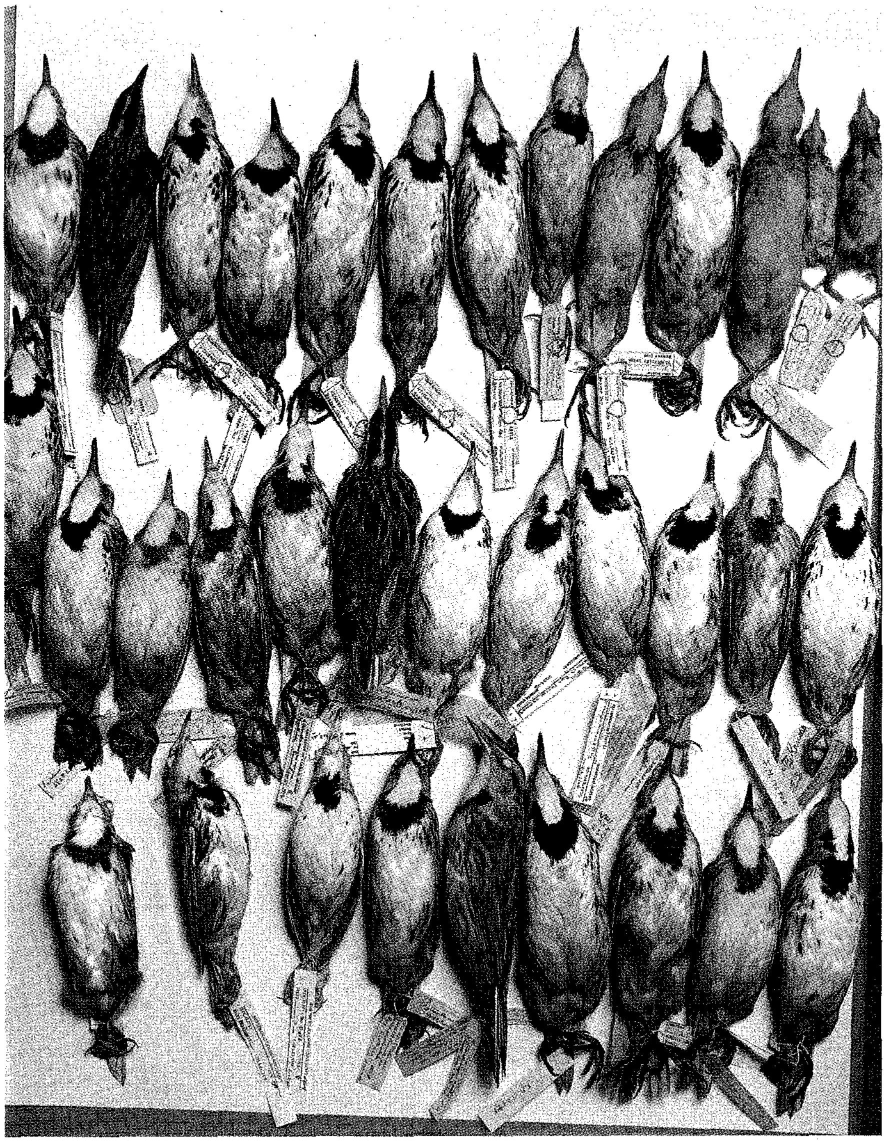
METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—**"Richard Avedon: Portraits"** presents the photographer's iconic images of the country's most influential figures, taken from the forties to the present, alongside portraits of humbler folk. Through Jan. 5. ♦ **"Gauguin in New York Collections: The Lure of the Exotic"** crowds the downstairs of the Robert Lehman wing with a few familiar masterpieces—the Met's "Ia Orana Maria (Hail Mary)," the Albright-Knox's "Manao Tupapau (Spirit of the Dead Watching)"—and many lesser paintings, drawings, sculptures, prints, documents, and oddities (portrait ceramic vessels, a carved walking stick representing a serpent and a wooden shoe). Saluting the Empire State's ravenous hunger for Gauguin, the unchoosy mélange affords a pungent sense of the artist's uneven, seductive mojo. Through Oct. 20. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART (MOMA QNS)
33rd St. at Queens Blvd., Long Island City (708-9480)—The museum's new home, until 2005, presents a slew of shows perfect for its big warehouse of a space, including the ongoing **"To Be Looked At: Painting and Sculpture from the Collection."** (Open Thursdays through Mondays, 10 to 5, and Friday evenings until 7:45.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—Hollywood disaster flick meets Renaissance fresco (think "The Poseidon Adventure" with art direction by Fra Angelico) in **"Going Forth by Day,"** Bill Viola's visually striking five-channel video piece commissioned by a German bank for the Guggenheim Berlin. In one projection, an eclectic procession traipses through a light-dappled forest (the panoramic image evokes old-fashioned CinemaScope). In an adjacent scene, water gushes from the windows and doors of a pristine building façade. Death and resurrection figure elsewhere in the action, as Viola tackles Big Themes. The work was conceived before the events of September 11th, and the portent of disaster is uncanny, if you can handle the smugly pious tone. Through Jan. 12. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 9 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 9 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—This midcareer retrospective of the work of Michal Rovner, an Israeli-born New York artist, opens with a mesmerizing black-and-white video; row upon row of moving figures cross paths silently in silhouette. (The image suggests an animated musical score with pedestrians in place of notes.) Rovner's work straddles photography, video, and digital art, riffing on minimalism with serial imagery of abstracted subjects. Through the artist's manipulations, bathers in the Dead Sea become ghostly bodies in suspended states, and flocks of birds transmogrify into foreboding constellations. There's a self-conscious gravitas to this stuff: despite arresting individual works, the over-all effect is aggravating. The work suffers from the kind of monotony that is often confused with momentousness. Through Oct. 13. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6; Fridays, 1 to 9.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART
Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—**"Exposed: The Victorian Nude,"** from Tate Britain, is a strong historical show about an era when jumpiness about sex had bizarre effects in art. Literary and classical themes provided the alibis for displaying naked females. Popular guises included Shakespearean fairies, virtuous heroines (Lady Godiva rides again, and again), Roman decadents, and the like. (One understands John Ruskin's wedding-night shock: according to British painters of the time, all ladies' pudenda are baby-bottom sleek.) For male nakedness, the excuse was propaganda for robust healthiness. Lust lurked, and smut reigned. A hand-colored Lewis Carroll photograph of a young girl posed as a Titian Venus leaves an exceptionally dire aftertaste. In this context, the finicky sensuality of the Pre-Raphaelites looks heroic. A turn toward frankness around the turn of the century—in the gloomy nudes of Walter Sickert and the too little known William Orpen—offers a fresh invention: actual people. Orpen's felicitously titled "The English Nude" (1900), a Rembrandtesque tour de force, presents a regular, interesting woman on a rumpled bed. Its mystery is that of really lived life. Through Jan. 5. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)



Terry Evans's "Drawer of Meadowlarks," at Richardson (see Photography).

FRICK COLLECTION
1 E. 70th St. (288-0700)—The collection isn't particularly strong in seventeenth-century French painting—with the notable exception of Claude's breezy, vast "Sermon on the Mount,"—so **"Poussin, Claude, and Their World,"** a show of drawings from the era of Louis XIV, makes a welcome supplement. The show, on loan from the École des Beaux-Arts, offers a wealth of drawings from the "grand siècle" of French painting. Among the sultry Madonnas, ecstatic saints, and leering satyrs are a few fascinating glimpses of real people and events: for instance, Charles Le Brun's drawing of the ambassadors of Siam bowing before the Sun King on his silver throne. The exhibition's highlight, however, is a rich trove of landscape drawings by Claude Lorrain. Breezily bewitching, they offer a great segue to nearby sylvan confections by Corot and Constable, not to mention the Olmstead and Vaux across the street. Through Dec. 1. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6; Friday evenings until 9; and Sundays, 1 to 6.)

GALLERIES-UPTOWN

Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.

AVIGDOR ARIKHA
The Paris-based Israeli realist is great with clutter. When he applies his distinctively dry, scrubby touch to serendipitous subjects—a newspaper left on a couch, overcrowded cupboards, drying towels, dropped napkins—the results make you want to cease straightening up forever. In contrast, his self-portraits, bouquets, and nudes are apt to be drably impressive. You have the feeling they're make-work projects—whiling away time before the next Arikha eureka. Through Oct. 5. (Marlborough, 40 W. 57th St. 541-4900.)

CLEVE GRAY
New, blowsily romantic abstractions by a Connecticut artist who has pursued a pleasant variant of Action painting for close to half a century. In one of two types of picture, a single big stroke, on a two-color ground, starts as a gesture and ends in lyrically hectic smudges. In the other, multicol-

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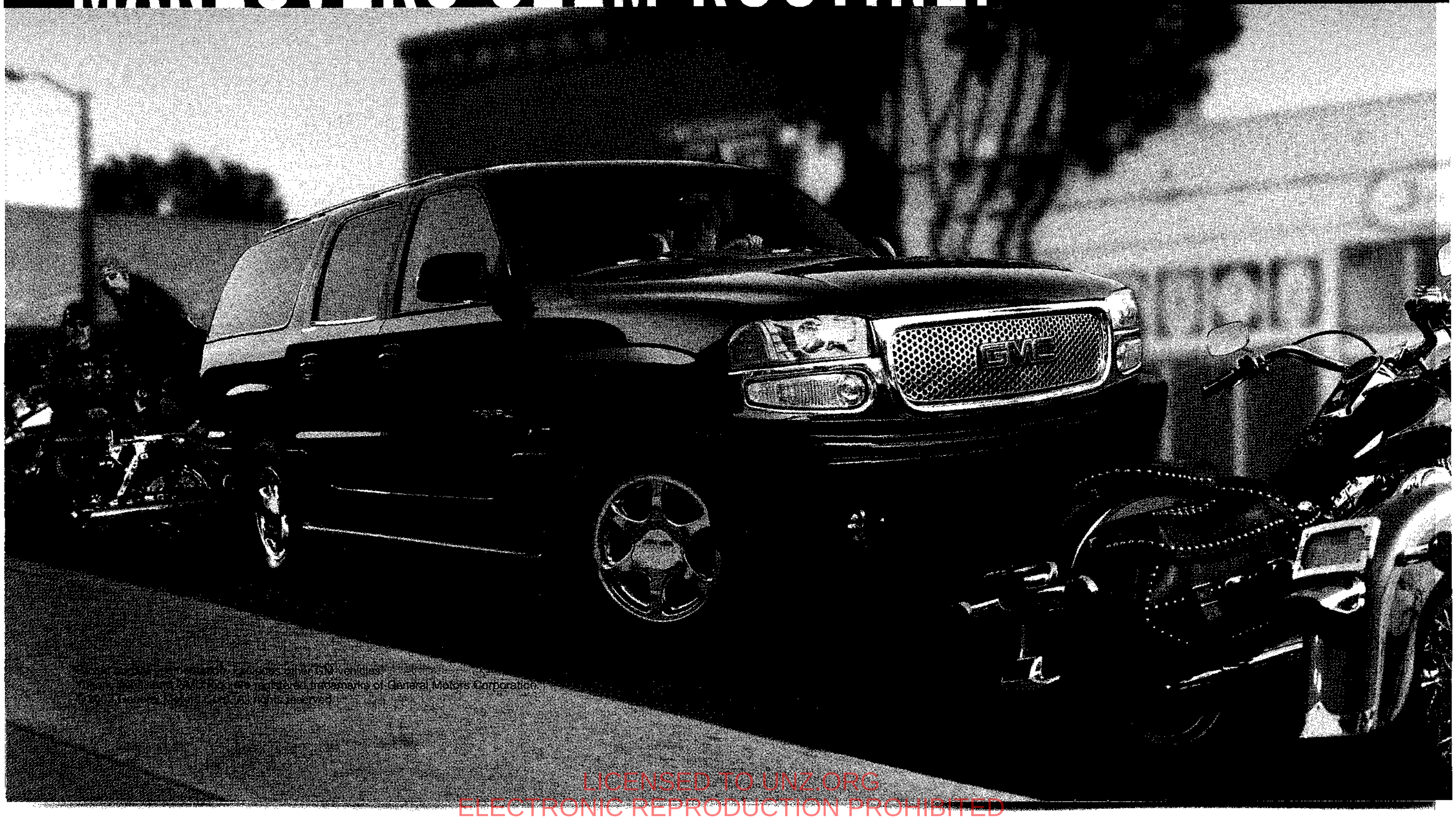

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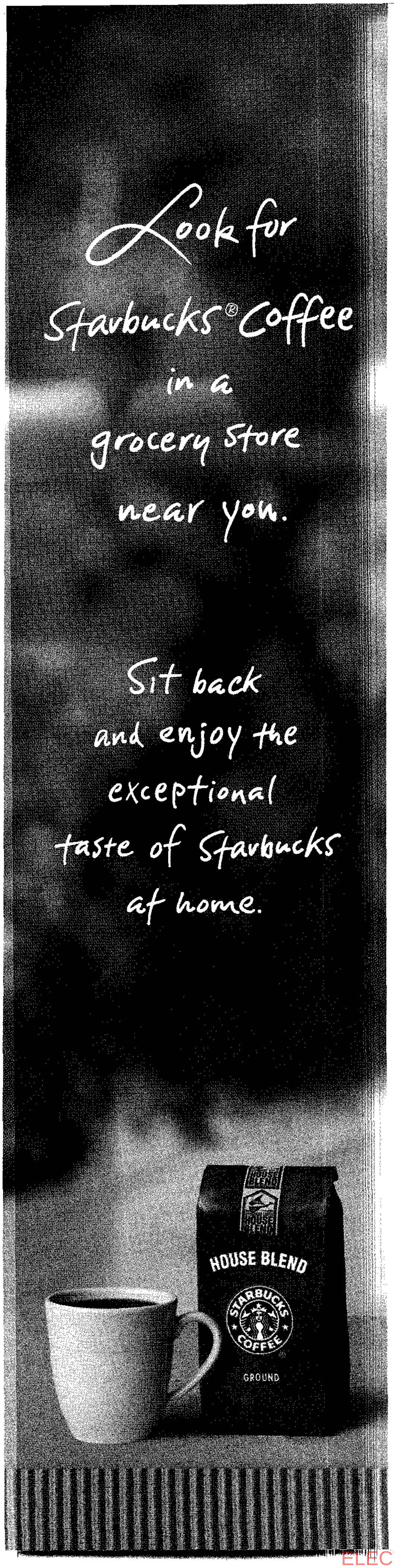


ored strokes cascade on grounds that are black or red. The work is handsome, palpably heartfelt, and perfunctory. Through Oct. 12. (Berry-Hill, 11 E. 70th St. 744-2300.)

SOL LE WITT

LeWitt's "wall drawings"—murals generated by written instructions—keep getting wilder, as if the Conceptualist were intent on trashing his own reputation for cerebral cool. But, as always, it turns out that he has just raised the stakes in his game. The gallery walls bear flat acrylic renderings of huge 3-D geometric forms: blocky "L" and "U" shapes and asymmetrical gridded layouts. At first, shrieking primary and secondary colors blast the eye, but after a few minutes they become almost restful, as you adjust to the pitch of their uniform intensity. The works suggest resurrected, brassy styles of the nineteen-sixties—Pop, Op, hard-edge, "Primary Structures," and supergraphics—which were eclipsed by more fashionable minimalist sobriety like LeWitt's. Through Oct. 12. (Pace Wildenstein, 32 E. 57th St. 421-3292.)

MARKUS LÜPERTZ

Astonishing paintings. The veteran German artist, known here as a more conservative peer of Georg Baselitz, has perfected a fiercely poetic new style: clustered, stuttering strokes in primary colors—plus green, black, and the white of exposed canvas—with loose borders in neutral hues, all enclosed by brushily painted wood frames. The effect is windowlike and suggests compressed Joan Mitchell. Titled "Semiramis" for the patroness of the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, the show emits floral sensations that are at once ecstatic and stern. A picture subtitled "Yellow Path" has only traces of yellow in it, and "Red Roses" displays almost no red—as if the eponymous colors would be too beautiful to bear. The work's demanding joys recall Rilke: "Every angel is terrible." Through Nov. 16. (Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St. 794-0550.)

Short List

DEBRA BERMINGHAM / WALT KUHN

DC Moore, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 247-2111. Through Oct. 5.

TOLAND GRINNELL

Mary Boone, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 752-2929. Through Oct. 19.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

DOUG AITKEN

Two domineering state-of-the-gimmick video installations. In a dark room with mirrored walls, spooky urban and rural images iris in and out on hanging, six-foot circular screens. The effect can be oh-wow psychedelic, if you're up for that. The second piece, filling a room with hanging, criss-crossed oval screens, presents a young Japanese woman who is losing her eyesight. In her Tokyo apartment, she pores over images to furnish a mental archive of visual memories. Razzle-dazzle free associations transport her around the world to a motorcycle accident on the plaza of Louis Kahn's Salk Institute and, well, that sort of thing. Tricks for tricks' sake. Through Oct. 26. (303 Gallery, 525 W. 22nd St. 255-1121.)

GEORG BASELITZ

Startlingly sweet-tempered new canvases, many of them tondos, by the topsy-turvy Siegfried of German painting. Taken from old Russian socialist-realist pictures and from holiday snapshots, the inverted subjects are people in amiable pairs and groups, mastering a tractor, perhaps, or posing in swimsuits. Swift, cartoony drawing; liquid or buttery paint; stencilled polka-dot patterns; and some cute colors (pink, lavender, pale yellow) make for slightly forced friskiness, like that of a clumsy person anxious to make friends. The works seem formally weak on purpose. Baselitz as a warm puppy? Beware of dog. Through Oct. 5. (Pace Wildenstein, 534 W. 25th St. 421-3292.)

WILLIE COLE

The New Jersey *bricoleur* and visual humorist is in top form with pseudo-African sculptures of bicycle parts, an X-shaped pool table that considerately channels balls to pockets at its extremities, and topical japes that would give most artists pause: a light-box rendition of "The Last Supper" in which everybody wields an AK-47 (Christ's levitates), a ceramic Virgin Mary wearing firecrackers like a suicide bomb, and a huge chicken (perhaps come home to roost, as per Malcolm X) made mostly of red-tipped wooden matches. There is no meanness about Cole's provocations, which shade into delights of craft and an ineffably humane panache. Through Oct. 12. (Alexander and Bonin, 132 Tenth Ave., at 18th St. 367-7474.)

RUSSELL CROTTY

In this charming walk-in solar system of a show, the artist, an amateur astronomer, mounts elaborate ballpoint-pen drawings of night skies on large Lucite spheres that dangle from the ceiling like wayward planets. (The drawings are based on telescopic observations Crotty made from his homemade observatory in Malibu.) Some are explicitly pictorial, like the ring of ponderosas that form a panorama below a speckled expanse of the Milky Way. In others, the detail has an all-over obsessive quality that suggests a science experiment by a maniacal minimalist. Through Oct. 26. (CRG, 535 W. 22nd St. 229-2766.)

WIM DELVOYE

Delvoye, the Damien Hirst of Belgium, is known for toilsome stunts involving show-offy technology, scatological humor, and ornate decoration. These now include nine big stained-glass windows, dedicated to the muses, which incorporate fragmented human X-rays; a suite of X-rays, printed on aluminum, of people engaging in sex acts; and a series of wooden birdhouses sporting zippered and studded black leather gear, S & M-style. A four-foot-high model of an excavating tractor, its surfaces jigsawed with Gothic filigree, and the stuffed remains of an elaborately tattooed pig revisit past themes. Any viewer who enjoys one of Delvoye's crass jokes will likely enjoy them all. Through Oct. 26. (Sperone Westwater, 415 W. 13th St. 999-7337.)

RIDLEY HOWARD

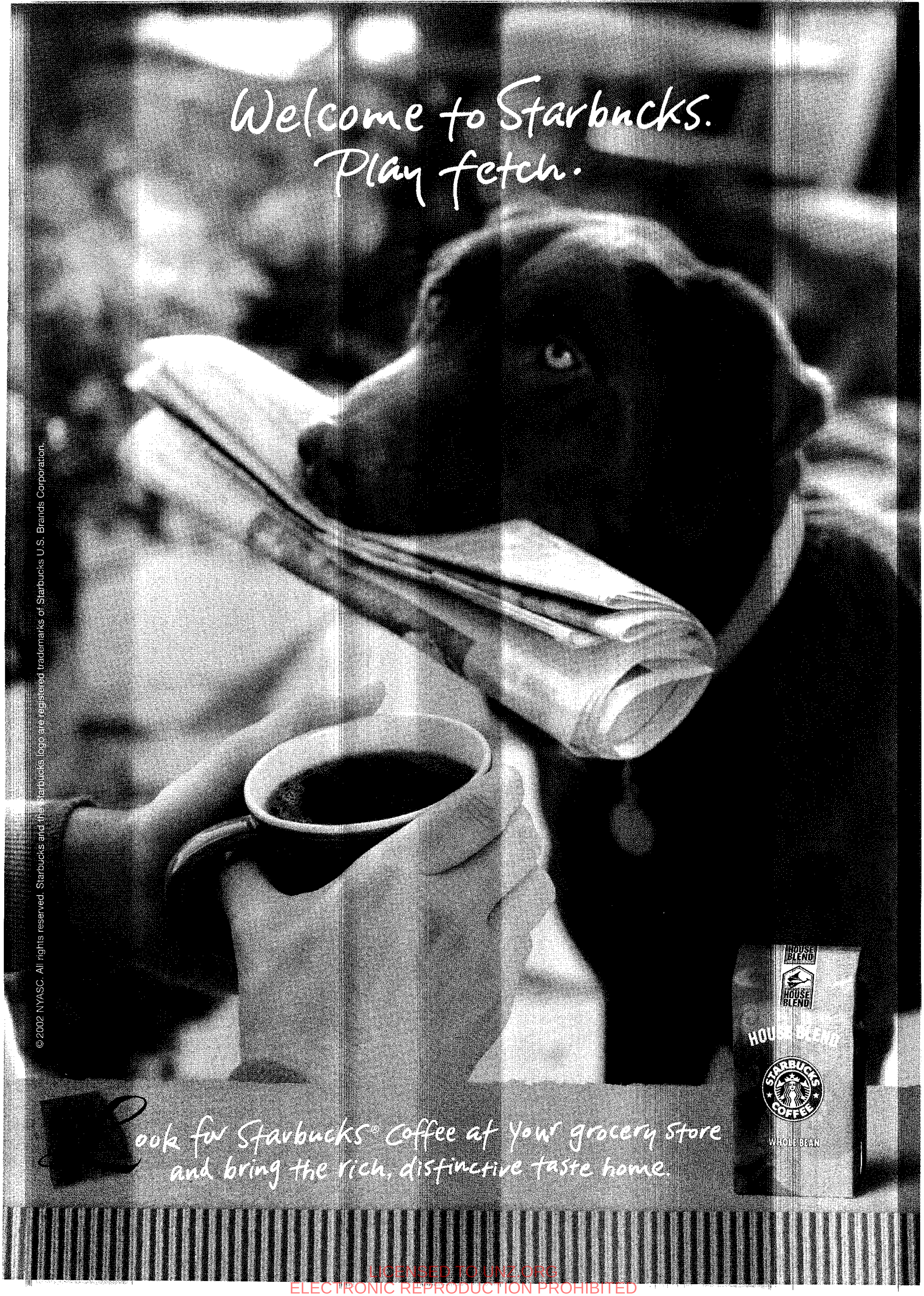
The characters in Howard's paintings seem vaguely related to Tintin and Alex Katz. Slim, affluent marionettes, they stroll through a theatrical version of some tony but despondent suburb. Everything—meadows, swimming pools, mansions—feels appealingly bleached and unreal, and the narratives are cosseted melodramas: nice walk, nice drink, an argument, more drinks, reconciliation. Not exactly "The Sopranos," but that's the point: Howard spoofs his upscale demimonde with complicit affection, using an appropriately subdued palette of taupes, pinks, and powder blues. Through Oct. 12. (Fredericks Freiser, 504 W. 22nd St. 633-6555.)

THOMAS SCHEIBITZ

Scheibitz is one of the best and most prominent young German painters. You wouldn't know it from this show, though, which offers a tantalizing, offhand assortment of new works: a couple of small canvases, a big puzzling drawing, and an even bigger, more puzzling sculpture. The latter's seven elements are recognizable (with a little work) as trees, a house, a church, a U.F.O., and a pointy-eared dog. At best, they offer a glimpse of Scheibitz's stylizing, planar imagination. Through Oct. 12. (Bonakdar, 521 W. 21st St. 414-4144.)

FERUS

A big, delicious historical show salutes Los Angeles's Ferus gallery, the commercial epicenter of West Coast avant-gardism in the years 1956-67. Irving Blum, the gallery's owner and director for most of its existence, mixed local and New York stars—Edward Ruscha and Roy Lichtenstein, Robert Irwin and Frank Stella, Kenneth Price and Donald Judd—in a spirit of hip connoisseurship like that of the then-emerging *Artforum* magazine, which from 1965 to 1967 was headquartered upstairs from the gallery's digs on La Cienega. In 1962, Blum mounted Andy Warhol's first solo show: thirty-two Campbell's-soup-can paintings, which appear here on loan from MOMA. The Ferus program struck sparks, which still crackle, between ascetic New York minimalism and its plastic-fantastic L.A. coun-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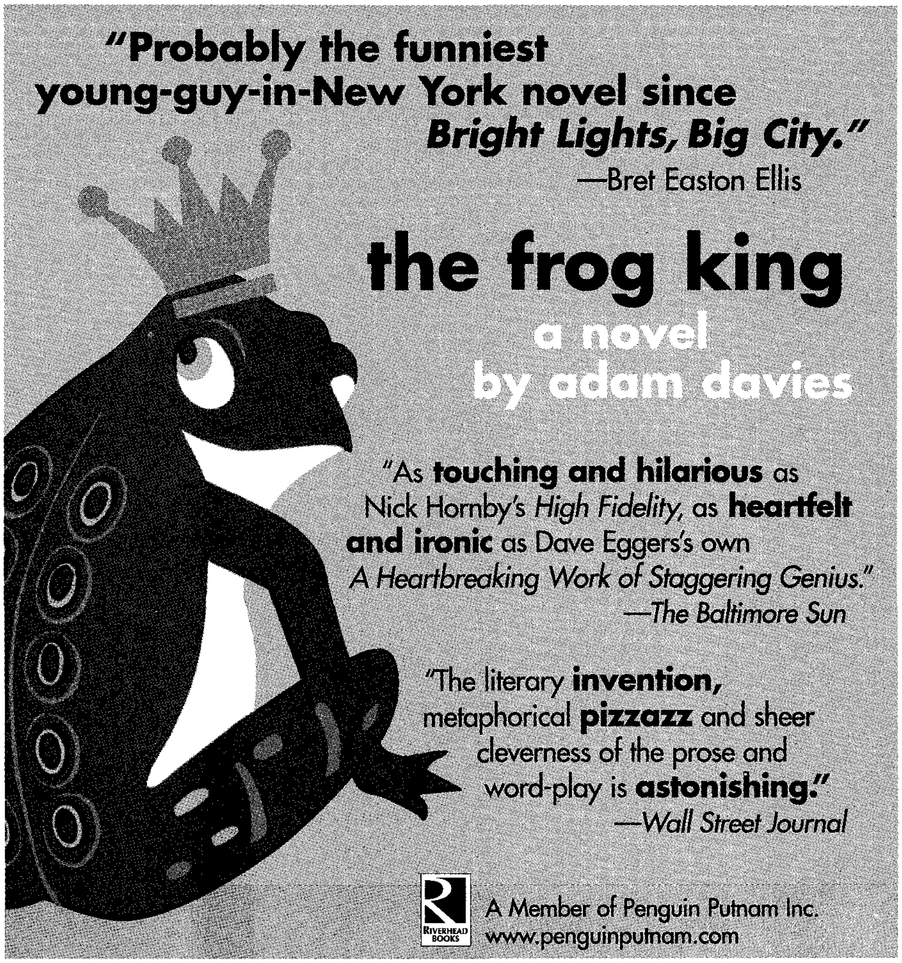

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—*Wall Street Journal*

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terpart. This show retrieves unjustly obscure Californians—Jay DeFeo, John Altoon, Hassel Smith, and others—and proves, among other things, that Ruscha's stunning "Los Angeles County Museum on Fire" (1965-68) is a pissed-off history painting for the ages. Through Oct. 19. (Gagosian, 555 W. 24th St. 741-1111.)

Short List

DIANA COOPER
Postmasters, 459 W. 19th St. 727-3323.
Through Oct. 12.
ANN CRAVEN
Gasser & Grunert, 524 W. 19th St.
807-9494. Through Oct. 5.
JAMES HYDE
Sikkema, 530 W. 22nd St. 929-2262.
Through Oct. 5.
NICOLE PARCHER
Zarre, 515 W. 20th St. 255-0202.
Through Oct. 4.
JULIA SCHER
Rosen, 525 W. 24th St. 627-6000.
Through Oct. 12.
CLAUDE VIALLAT
Cheim & Reid, 547 W. 25th St. 242-7727.
Through Oct. 12.

GALLERIES–DOWNTOWN

TORBEN GIEHLER
Five large-scale, digitally inflected paintings that hover between abstraction and representation in a synth-pop palette of caution-tape orange, Hi-Liter yellow, and iMac blue. Three are vertiginous grids that evoke skyline landscapes. The others are mountain scenes that could be computer flight simulations programmed by Crayola. All have an impressive muscular appeal. Through Oct. 12. (Koenig, 249 Centre St., at Grand St. 334-9255.)

JIM SHAW
A round table, a seven-sided filing cabinet, and seven slapdash target paintings (spin art has more visual interest than these New York School spoofs) make up this dreary installation by a Los Angeles artist best known for drawing his dreams. The press release reveals what the show itself doesn't: this is ostensibly a narrative about a devotee of a fictional religion Shaw calls O-ism. Through Oct. 26. (Swiss Institute, 495 Broadway, 925-2035.)

Short List

JOHN BISBEE
Plane Space, 102 Charles St. 917-606-1268.
Through Oct. 4.
PEPÓN OSORIO
Feldman, 31 Mercer St. 226-3232.
Through Oct. 19.
RICHARD WOODS
Deitch Projects, 76 Grand St. 343-7300.
Through Oct. 19.

GALLERIES–BROOKLYN

FORREST MYERS / MICHAEL TALLEY
The prints on the wall can't compete with the two pieces parked in the middle of the floor. Talley's two-wheeled "Adrenaline" is built to set said hormone pumping; its knee-high, eighteen-foot-long, bullet-shaped body, part of a Vietnam-era fighter jet, has been retooled to set world speed records on the Bonneville Flats, in Nevada. Myers's "Unocycle," a single-wheeled motorcycle whose six-foot tire rotates around the rider (you sit where the spokes should be), likewise strains credulity. The curator warns novice unocyclists that hitting the brakes suddenly will cause them to do multiple three-hundred-and-sixty-degree rolls. Through Oct. 14. (Sideshow, 319 Bedford Ave., Williamsburg. 718-486-8180.)

MATT MARELLO
In the famous but altered documentary footage at the center of this small show, Marello appears

Linda Lavin

Michele Pawk Frank Wood

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spliced into the place of the Action painter Jackson Pollock splattering his canvas. Similarly doctored loops show Marello as John Bonham thrashing out a drum solo and as Bruce Lee whirling nun-chucks. He plays his live-hard-die-young fetish in other ways: posing on the running board of Pollock's truck in the exhibit's sole still, shooting video of headlights en route to the site of Pollock's fatal crash, and carving all paintbrushes, drumsticks, and nun-chucks used in his work from wood found on the Hamptons crash site. Through Oct. 7. (Pierogi, 177 N. 9th St., Williamsburg. 718-599-2144.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

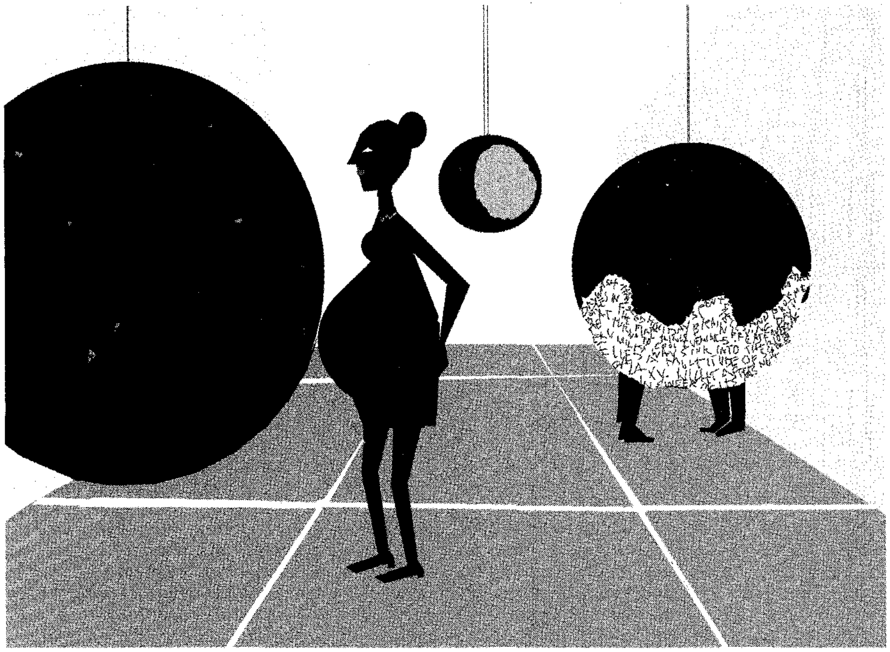
HORACE BRISTOL
When America entered the Second World War, Bristol (who in civilian life had been one of *Life's* first staff photographers) was asked to join the élite unit of Lieutenant Commander Edward Steichen and was soon on board an aircraft carrier heading toward North Africa with the troops who were under the command of General Patton. Bristol must have packed a modernist aesthetic in his duffel bag, because these vintage prints of sailors loading guns, watching for attacking planes, reading magazines, jumping rope, playing cards, and tossing horseshoes are unexpected juxtapositions of precise geometric form against strikingly theatrical skies. Out of the steel, sweat, and cigarette smoke of these tense missions, Bristol created plainspoken odes to human compassion. Through Oct. 12. (Miller, 524 W. 26th St. 366-4774.)

TERRY EVANS
These photographs of birds, fish, and weeds from the American specimen collections at the Smithsonian and the Field Museum, in Chicago, exude a musty, elegiac air. For instance, "Field Museum, Trumpeter Swan, North Dakota, 1891," shows an elegantly contorted and muslin-wrapped bird that, in this form, has certainly outlived the naturalist who first catalogued it. What seems to be fifty jumbled lizards in a jar of formaldehyde could look a little creepy, but Evans's eye for color, composition, and compassion takes away the sting. Through Oct. 12. (Richardson, 535 W. 22nd St. 646-230-9610.)

TODD HIDO
People are not Hido's subjects, but their presence is felt in unsettling ways. Known for eerily colored prints of houses at night, lit from within, Hido uses no flash, just a long exposure time near a window. His technique hasn't changed, but now Hido has hit the road, standing under street lamps and shooting roadside landscapes that look like strangely beautiful accident scenes without the victims. In one bluish print, tire tracks streak through a wet snow—perhaps the car crash is just outside the frame. In another, an endless cracked asphalt path lies between two scrubby hills over which any type of miscreant could jump. Through Oct. 5. (Morris, 465 W. 23rd St. 727-2752.)

JUSTINE KURLAND
Breaking out of the all-girl photo ghetto, Kurland shifts her lens from tableaux of teen-agers to tribes of hippies in clothing-optional Arcadias in this series of color pictures. There's a Romantic, nineteenth-century aura to the show (picture Julia Margaret Cameron as a Phish fan), as parents and children garden, stroll, or lie in rivers. The best pictures, however, are laced with menace, like the one of a doughy, naked boy who lounges on a tree limb while a grown man in the high grass wields an upraised sickle. Through Oct. 12. (Gorney Bravin + Lee, 534 W. 26th St. 352-8372.)

"INVISIBLE BEINGS"
Georgiana Houghton performed séances and other acts of miscellaneous spiritual invocation in eighteen-seventies London, and in collaboration with the studio of Fredrick Hudson created sepia-toned, carte-de-visite-size photographic records of her supposed mediumship. These weird, disturbing, at times even terrifying images pose rigid Victorians on high-backed chairs only to surround them with Symbolist-style emanations that either glow like Glinda or gesture ominously like Banquo. Even skeptical viewers will find themselves entranced. Through Nov. 14. (De Lellis, 47 E. 68th St. 327-1482.)



Russell Crotty's ballpoint-pen drawings mounted on Lucite spheres, at CRG.

KIM DEMARCO

Short List

ALLEN GINSBERG
Greenberg, 120 Wooster St. 334-0010.
Through Oct. 12.

PAUL SHAMBROOM
Saul, 535 W. 22nd St. 627-2410.
Through Oct. 12.

"THE NEW BAUHAUS"
Silverstein, 504 W. 22nd St. 627-3930.
Through Nov. 9.

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Oct. 2-3 at 10 A.M.: The monthly "House Sale," two sessions aimed primarily at new collectors and featuring a wide range of furniture, paintings, drawings, rugs, and other decorative items. ♦ Oct. 4 at 10 A.M. and 2: The house auctions the Harvey Plotnick Library on the Development of Quantum Physics and the Theory of Relativity, a compendium of books, pamphlets, letters, and manuscripts by such figures as Einstein, Newton, Max Planck, and Pierre and Marie Curie. The highlight of the collection is the Einstein-Besso Working Manuscript, in which the great scientist and his close friend make an early attempt to prove the theory of relativity. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 636-2000.)

DOYLE

Oct. 8 at 10 A.M.: Jewelry, watches, and objects of virtu. (175 E. 87th St. 427-2730.)

SWANN

Oct. 2 at 10:30 A.M: Early printed books, including works from the fields of religion, law, literature, and philosophy. ♦ Oct. 2 at 2:30: Books on medicine, science, and natural history. Hieronymus Brunschwig's "Dis Ist das Buch der Cirurgia," considered the first important surgical treatise in German to be printed, is a highlight of the sale. (104 E. 25th St. 254-4710.)

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OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA

"Elektra," with Deborah Polaski, Karita Mattila, Marjana Lipovšek, Wolfgang Neumann, and Alan Held; James Levine conducts. (Oct. 2 and Oct. 5 at 8.) ♦ **"La Cenerentola,"** with Sonia Ganassi, Joyce Guyer, Patricia Risley, Juan Diego Flórez, Alessandro Corbelli, Simone Alaimo, and John Relyea; Edoardo Müller. (Oct. 3 at 7:30 and Oct. 8 at 8.) ♦ Giordano's **"Andrea Chénier,"** one of Plácido Domingo's favorite verismo vehicles, with Sylvie Valayre, Juan Pons, and Wendy White; Levine. (Oct. 4 at 8.) ♦ Franco Zeffirelli's production of **"Turandot,"** with Andrea Gruber (in the title role), Hei-Kyung Hong, Vladimir Galouzine, and Hao Jiang Tian; Carlo Rizzi. (Oct. 5 at 1:30.) ♦ **"Carmen,"** with Denyce Graves (in the title role), Mary Mills, Clifton Forbis, and Ludovic Tézier (making his début, as Escamillo); Yves Abel. (Oct. 7 at 7:30.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)

NEW YORK CITY OPERA

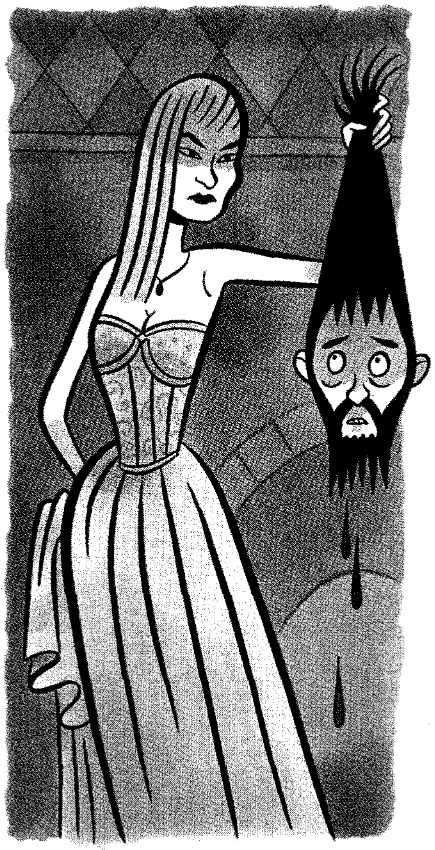
The final performance of Jake Heggie and Terrence McNally's **"Dead Man Walking,"** with Joyce DiDonato, John Packard, Robert Orth, and Adina Aaron; John DeMain is the conductor. (Oct. 2 at 7:30.) ♦ **"Don Giovanni,"** with Peter Volpe (in the title role), Twyla Robinson, Alison Buchanan, John Osborn, and Michael Wanko; Steven White conducts the Harold Prince production. (Oct. 3 and Oct. 8 at 7:30.) ♦ **"Madama Butterfly,"** with Maria Gavrilova, Mika Shigematsu, Scott Piper, and Charles Robert Stephens; Brent McMunn conducts. (Oct. 4 at 8 and Oct. 6 at 7:30.) ♦ A new production of **"Salome"** continues its run, featuring Eilana Lappalainen (in the title role), Linda Roark-Strummer, Richard Berkeley-Steele, Brandon Jovanovich, and Mark Delavan; George Manahan. (Oct. 5 at 1:30.) ♦ The house's sturdy John Copley production of **"The Marriage of Figaro"** returns for the season with some interesting casting choices, notably Nathan Berg as Figaro and Amy Burton as the Countess, both of whom excel as much in the finely spun craft of art song as they do in works for the lyric stage. Also with Ying Huang, Kirstin Chávez, Myrna Paris, Christopher Schaldenbrand, and Kevin Glavin; Steven Mosteller. (Oct. 5 at 8.) (New York State Theatre. 870-5570.)

DICAPO OPERA

Not many people know that New York has a third professional opera company—which happens to be ensconced in a cushy modern theatre on the Upper East Side. Dicapo's season begins with **"L'Elisir d'Amore,"** staged by Michael Capasso and conducted by Elaine Rinaldi. (Dicapo Opera Theatre, 184 E. 76th St. 288-9438. Oct. 3-5 at 8 and Oct. 6 at 4.)

NEXT WAVE FESTIVAL: "GALILEO GALILEI"

Philip Glass's latest operatic pageant concerns the sixteenth-century scientist, whose support of Copernican planetary theory got him in so much trouble with the Catholic Church. (Mary Zimmerman wrote the libretto, with input from the composer and the redoubtable librettist Arnold Weinstein.) William Lumpkin conducts the Eos Orchestra; John Duykers heads the cast. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100. Oct. 3-5 at 7:30. These are the final performances.)



Eilana Lappalainen sings the title role in "Salome" at City Opera on Oct. 5.

SETH

AMERICAN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA: "THE EGYPTIAN HELEN"

Strauss's "Die Ägyptische Helena" is perhaps the toughest nut among his later operas: Hofmannsthal's libretto, about the married life of Helen of Troy, is not only bewildering but absurd (an omniscient seashell serves as one of the characters). Yet there is a lot of fine music, in the composer's lush and sparkling style, and the conductor Leon Botstein's concert airings of neglected operas have offered some pleasant surprises in the past. Making it more tempting is the assignment of Deborah Voigt to the title role; the other singers include the tenor Carl Tanner, the mezzo-soprano Jill Grove, and the baritone Christopher Robertson. (Avery Fisher Hall. 868-9276. Oct. 6 at 3.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC

Lorin Maazel's first season with the Philharmonic has gotten off to an impressive start: the conductor's all-Beethoven opening concert evinced not only his legendary command of detail but a noticeable affection for the music he led. His next subscription series finds him in what might be trickier territory, that of the late-Romantic blockbuster: Mussorgsky's "Night on Bald Mountain," Rachmaninoff's Second Piano Concerto (with the incandescent Lang Lang), and Sibelius's Symphony No. 2. He knows these pieces cold—but their passionate qualities need just as much attention as their surfaces. (Oct. 3 and Oct. 8 at 7:30, Oct. 4 at 2, and Oct. 5 at 8.) (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5656.)

CHICAGO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Carnegie Hall begins its season with a trio of concerts by the magnificent Midwest ensemble. Oct. 2 at 7: Opening night, a program of Falla ("Nights in the Gardens of Spain") and Ravel (including "Rhapsodie Espagnole" and "Alborada del Gracioso") will not only be festive but will allow the C.S.O.'s music director, Daniel Barenboim, to exhibit his talents as both conductor and pianist. ♦ Oct. 3 at 8: The other two programs showcase German and modernist repertory, favorites of Barenboim's and areas in which the orchestra can show off its brains as well as its brawn. The first features music by Brahms (the First Piano Concerto, with Radu Lupu), Schoenberg, and Wagner. ♦ Oct. 4 at 8: Music by Bach, Boulez ("Originel" from ". . . explosante-fixe . . . ," featuring the flutist Mathieu Dufour), and Bruckner (the Ninth Symphony). (247-7800.)

VOICES OF ASCENSION

In a concert dedicated to the victims of last fall's terrorist attacks, Dennis Keene conducts an intimate performance of Brahms's "German Requiem," using the composer's accompaniment for piano four-hands. (Church of the Ascension, Fifth Ave. at 10th St. Oct. 2 at 8:15. No tickets required.)

ORCHESTRA OF THE AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT

Cecilia Bartoli is the guest for a program of arias and instrumental works by Vivaldi, Gluck, C. P. E. Bach, and others. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Oct. 6 at 7:30.)

LONDON PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

Kurt Masur, the orchestra's principal conductor, comes back to New York for a pair of concerts. Oct. 7 at 8: 2002 is William Walton's centenary, and, although his music may not be universally loved, the brooding yet glamorous Viola Concerto is one of his unquestioned masterpieces. Yuri Bashmet plays it in a concert that also includes music by Prokofiev (the Symphony No. 5 in B-Flat Major) and Strauss. ♦ Oct. 8 at 8: Masur conducts Beethoven's First Symphony and Bruckner's Seventh. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800.)

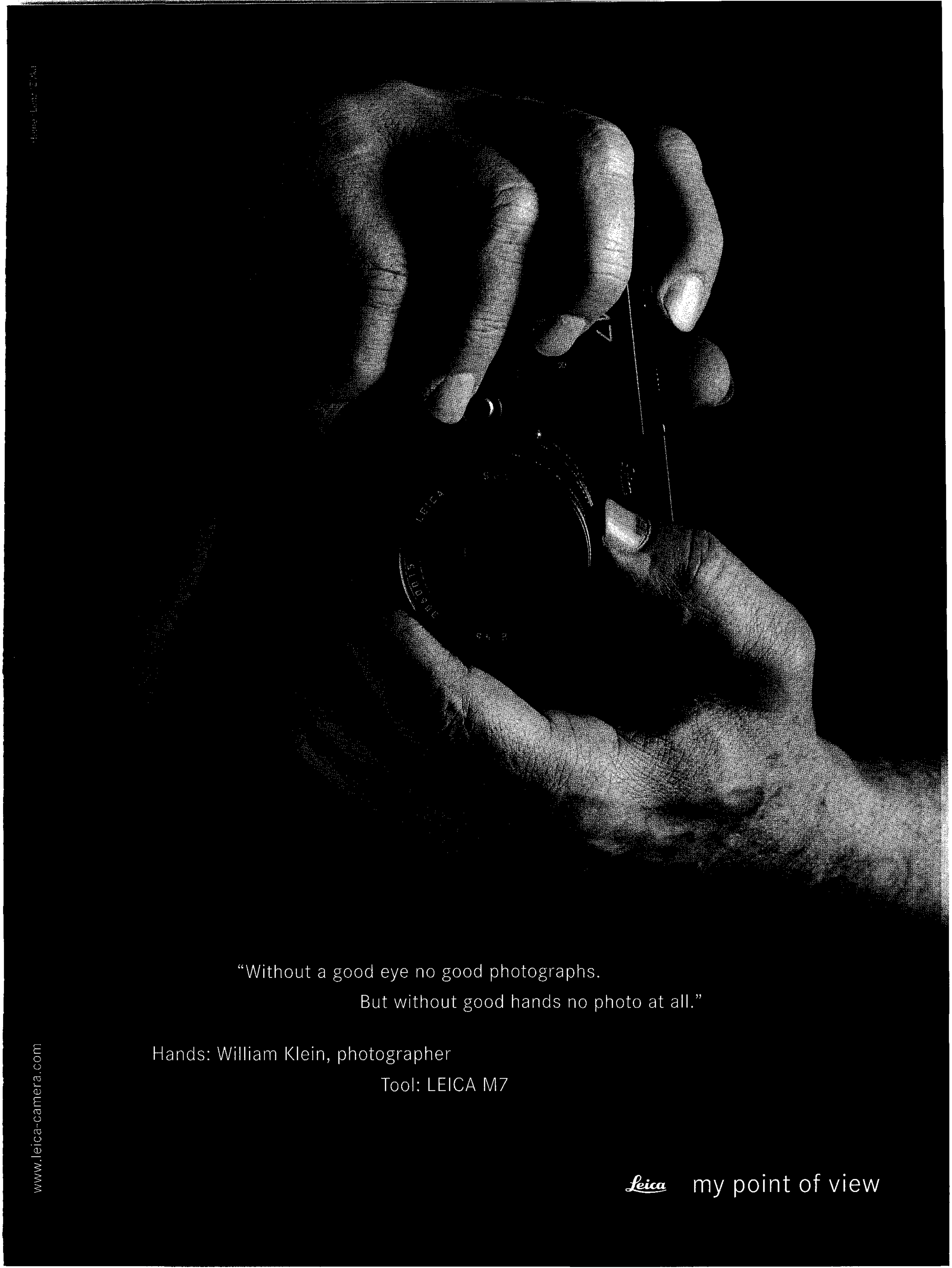
RECITALS

AMERICAN ACADEMY IN ROME CONCERTS

Every fall, thirty lucky artists and scholars in a range of disciplines, supported by fellowships, converge on the Academy's grand pile on the Janiculum Hill to pursue their work in a near-idyllic setting. Composers, many of them prominent, have been part of the Academy's life since the twenties, something the organization is celebrating with a series of concerts at Weill Recital Hall. The first program includes chamber and vocal works by such alumni as Elliott Carter, Samuel Barber (the String Quartet, from which the great "Adagio" is derived), Lukas Foss, and Stephen Hartke; the soprano Susan Narucki, the percussionist Daniel Druckman, and the Borromeo String Quartet are among the featured performers. (Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Oct. 2 at 8.)

MUSIC AT MERKIN CONCERT HALL

Oct. 2 at 8: Concertante, a vibrant young string ensemble, performs a classical program laced with an ethnic flavor, including Dvořák's Quintet with Double Bass and Osvaldo Golijov's "Last Round," a tribute (for two duelling quartets and a bass) to the fistfight-loving tango legend Astor Piazzolla. ♦ Oct. 3 at 8: Taking its cue from the Philharmonic, perhaps, the players of New York Philomusica open their season with an all-Beethoven program featuring the String Quintet in C Major and a chamber version of the Fourth Piano Concerto (with Robert Levin). ♦ Oct. 6 at 3: The musicians of New York Philharmonic Ensembles (including the harpist Nancy Allen and the hornist Erik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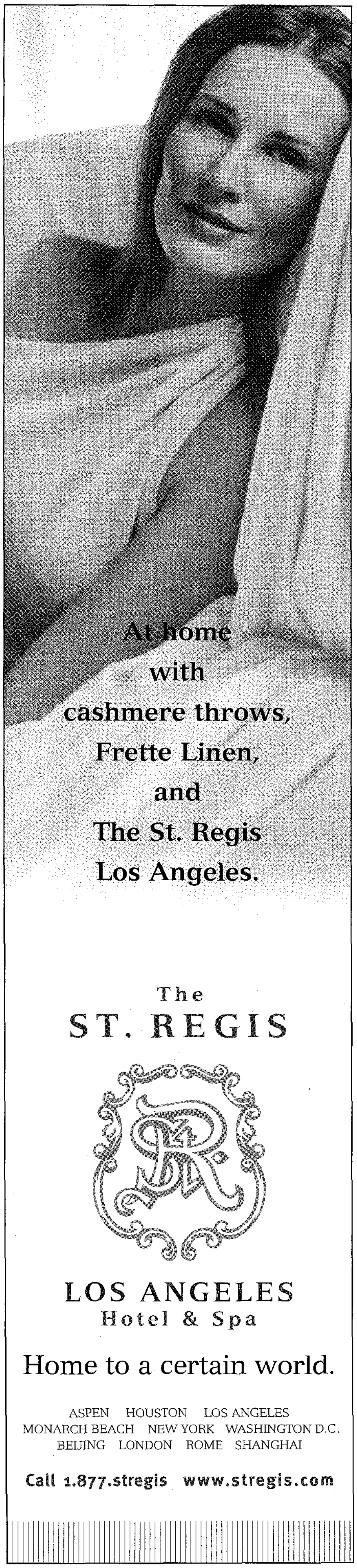
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Ralske) offer a program of Bax, Nielsen, Villa-Lobos, and Grieg (the String Quartet in G Minor, one of the most influential chamber works of the late nineteenth century). ♦ Oct. 7 at 8: The Elements String Quartet plays a crazy-quilt program of Bach, Rachmaninoff, Dvořák, Hollis Taylor, and John Zorn. The pianist Ruth Laredo, an elegant traditionalist, comes along for the ride. (129 W. 67th St. 501-3330.)

BARGEMUSIC
Oct. 3-4 at 7: In the last of the series' fall Beethoven concerts, the violinist Mark Peskanov, the violist Toby Hoffman, and the cellist Jan Vogler perform the three String Trios, Op. 9. ♦ Oct. 5 at 7 and Oct. 6 at 4: A program featuring quartets by Haydn (the "Lark") and Dvořák (the "American"), in which the three musicians are joined by the violinist Mira Wang. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

MUSIC UNDER CONSTRUCTION: JOHN CAGE
Marc Peloquin, a young pianist with a lucid and sensitive style, plays the landmark "Sonatas and Interludes," for prepared piano. (10 E. 18th St. 924-7882. Oct. 5 at 8.)

FLORILEGIUM
A new season of music at the Frick Collection's auditorium, a grand yet intimate domed space that is one of the city's ideal chamber-music halls, begins with a concert by this renowned early-music group of flute, strings, and harpsichord. The program features works by Vivaldi, Geminiani, and Pergolesi. (1 E. 70th St. 288-0700. Oct. 6 at 5.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

FAMILY HISTORY FAIR
Representatives from more than forty genealogical societies, historical agencies, archival repositories, and ethnic organizations gather for workshops on such topics as navigating New York City's "Mall of Records" (31 Chambers Street), combing through Civil War archives, and using the Internet to find one's ancestors. The fair marks the start of the fourteenth annual New York Archives Week. (Graduate Center, City University of New York, Fifth Ave. at 34th St. Oct. 6 from noon to 5. For more information, visit www.nycarchivists.org.)

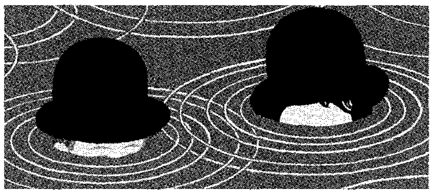
READINGS
Oct. 2 at 7: The novelist Carol Emshwiller offers passages from her latest books, "The Mount" and "Report to the Men's Club and Other Stories." (Book Court, 163 Court St., Brooklyn. 718-875-3677.) ♦ Oct. 2 at 7:30: Breyten Breytenbach, Peter Cole, Cleopatra Mathis, Lawrence Weschler, and other poets and friends of the Sheep Meadow Press join the imprint's founder, Stanley Moss, for a reading of their own work and work by Paul Celan, Yehuda Amichai, Federico García Lorca, and other poets published by the press. (Casa Italiana, New York University, 24 W. 12th St. For more information, call 254-9628.) ♦ Oct. 2 at 8: Alex Katz, Paul Violi, Robert Creeley, Anne Waldman, and other poets and writers pay tribute to the poet Kenneth Koch, who died earlier this year. (Poetry Project, St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. Tickets at the door.) ♦ Oct. 6 at 2: The local moonlighting writers Joel Kostman (locksmith), Timothy (Speed) Levitch (tour guide), and Frank Lima (chef) read from their stories about New York City life. (Eldridge Street Project, 12 Eldridge St. 219-0903.)

TALKS
Oct. 3 at 6: The architectural writer David Garrard Lowe discusses the history of New York City's Beaux Arts buildings. (Museum of the City of New York, Fifth Ave. at 104th St. 534-1672.) ♦ Oct. 8 at 6:30: The NPR contributor David Rakoff interviews the New York *Times* columnist Randy Cohen, who writes The Ethicist. (Celeste Bartos Forum, New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. 930-0571.) ♦ Oct. 8 at 8: Robert Templer, a historian and the author of "Shadows and Wind: A View of Modern Vietnam," considers the possible effects that military action in Iraq might have on Afghanistan and Central Asia. (Asia Society, Park Ave. at 70th St. 517-2742.)

BOOK CURRENTS

Funny Men

"Put 'em both up, insect, before I comb your hair with lead" is not a promising start to a friendship. But with the first line ever exchanged on film between Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy, in "The Lucky Dog" (1921), the two were already "in perfect physical synch," Simon Louvish writes in the forthcoming **STAN AND OLLIE** (St. Martin's). The pair's humor involved a lot of smashing—falling crockery, specially built collapsible Model Ts, and the inexplicable flying pie. ("You know, you never saw where it came from," Laurel commented.) The backgrounds of the two men were as distinct as their physiognomies; Arthur Stanley Jefferson, the thin one with the worried face, was from northwest England, and the rotund Oliver Norvell Hardy came from Harlem, Georgia. But over the course of hundreds of shorts and features, "the boys" (often thinly disguised as detectives, sailors, or jailbirds) and their antics brought Depression-era audiences the relief of slapstick misadventure instead of real-life pain. "Ordinary life is fraught with peril," Louvish writes, and it "can be survived only moment by moment."


MICHAEL KUPPERMAN

This was the philosophy, certainly, of the comedic filmmaker and actor Harold Lloyd, most famous as the bespectacled young man clinging to the face of a giant clock in his silent film "Safety Last!" (1923). With almost two hundred films in all, Lloyd was once so popular that he was known to French audiences merely as "lui" (him). Jeffrey Vance and Suzanne Lloyd, in **HAROLD LLOYD: MASTER COMEDIAN** (Abrams), note that he did not make the transition to talkies easily; the films downplayed the visual gags that were Lloyd's brilliance. "Practically all the gags that I did—with one or two exceptions—were all something that could happen," Lloyd said. "It wasn't very probable, but it could happen."

—*Lauren Porcaro*

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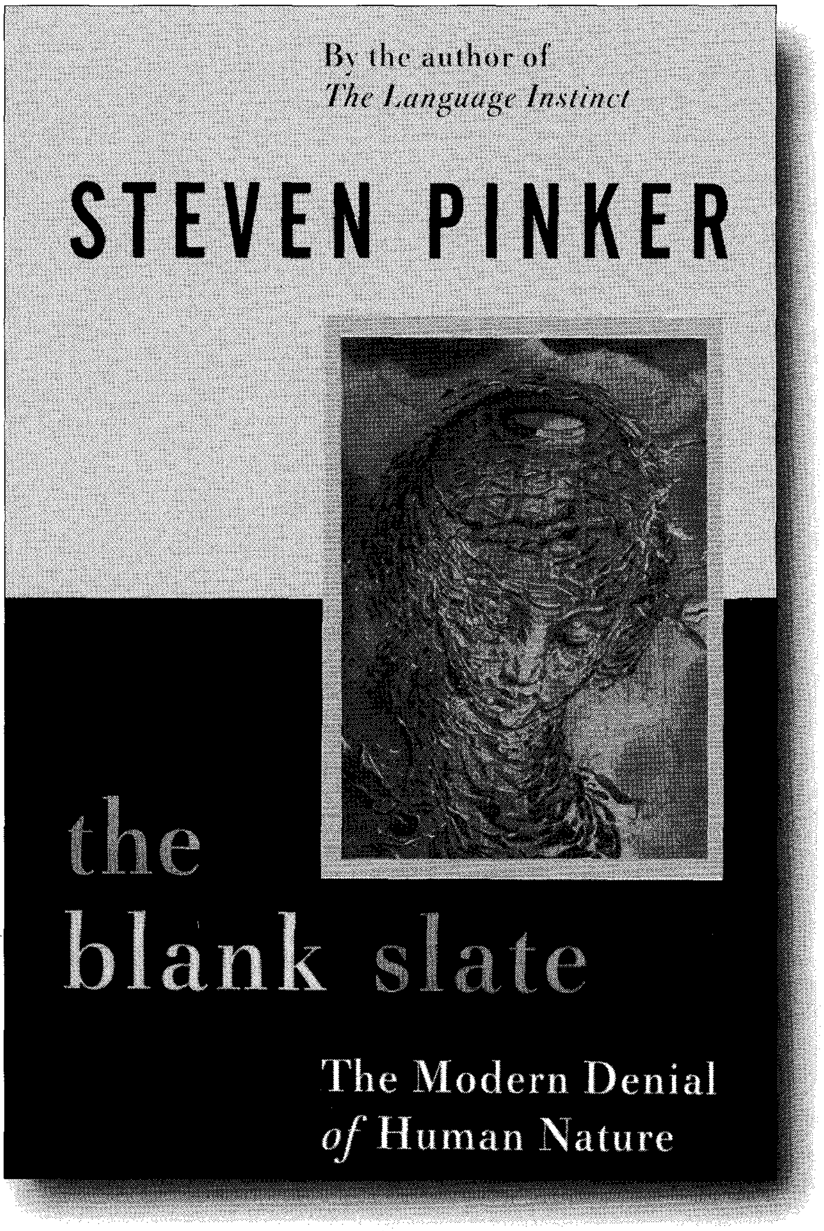

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MOVIES OPENING

AREA K
A documentary about the Israeli-controlled marine zone around the Gaza Strip. Paired with "Frontiers of Dreams and Fears," a portrait of two Palestinian girls who live in a refugee camp. Opening Oct. 3. (Anthology Film Archives.)

BLOODY SUNDAY
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Oct. 4.

HEAVEN
Tom Tykwer ("Run Lola Run") directed this drama written by Krzysztof Kieslowski, in which a widow (Cate Blanchett) tries to kill an Italian drug dealer by planting a homemade bomb. Also with Giovanni Ribisi. Opening Oct. 4.

THE MAN FROM ELYSIAN FIELDS
A novelist (Andy Garcia) becomes a male escort to support his family, in a drama directed by George Hickenlooper. With James Coburn, Anjelica Huston, and Mick Jagger, who plays the head of the escort service. Opening Oct. 2.

PIPE DREAM
A romantic comedy starring Mary-Louise Parker as a screenwriter who sees her script become a hot project after it's stolen by a plumber (Martin Donovan) with whom she had a one-night stand. Directed by John C. Walsh. Opening Oct. 4.

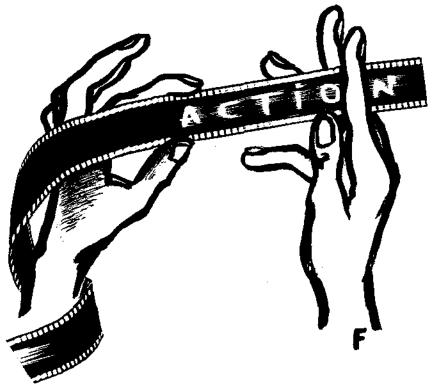
RED DRAGON
An adaptation of the first Hannibal Lecter novel, directed by Brett Ratner. The cast includes Anthony Hopkins, Edward Norton, Emily Watson, Ralph Fiennes, and Philip Seymour Hoffman. Opening Oct. 4.

WELCOME TO COLLINWOOD
An ensemble comedy, set in Cleveland, about a group of misfits who attempt to pull off a bank heist. With William H. Macy, Isaiah Washington, George Clooney, and others. Written and directed by Joe and Anthony Russo. Opening Oct. 4.

FILM NOTES

ALIAS BETTY
It's been a good year for French films, and the latest offering from the director Claude Miller is no exception. Based on a Ruth Rendell novel, the movie tells the story of an emotionally unstable grandmother (Nicole Garcia) who, after her young grandson's death, decides to kidnap a battered child and, with the help of her daughter (Sandrine Kiberlain), bring him up as their own. Kiberlain gives a riveting performance, and the carefully calculated scenario unfolds with emotional complications worthy of Truffaut. The story is presented from many points of view, including those of the kidnapped child's family—it's a character study with many characters—and Miller's sure hand fashions all the bits into a provocative nightmare of motherhood. In French.—*Bruce Diones* (Eastside Playhouse, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Quad Cinema.)

THE BANGER SISTERS
Goldie Hawn, wearing her pants very tight, does some real acting as a funny, lewd good-time girl, an ex-groupie who has always been too careless to put anything together for herself. Dismissed from her job as a bartender on Sunset Strip, she goes looking for her old friend and fellow-groupie, Vinnie (Susan Sarandon), who long ago shipped out to Phoenix, married well, and became a part of the community. The two actresses set off a few sparks in their scenes with each other, but the idea that middle-aged women need to liberate themselves by discovering their inner groupie is, well, bananas. The screenwriter Bob Dolman wrote and directed this pedestrian, desperate-to-shock movie, which feels less like a story about women's lives than some corkscrewed male fantasy.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 9/23/02.) (Battery Park 16, Beekman, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Olympia I and II, 62nd & Broadway, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)



BARBERSHOP
A mellow, good-spirited comedy set on the South Side of Chicago, in which a restless young man (Ice Cube) comes to understand the value of his father's business. There's the college-educated barber (Sean Patrick Thomas), the rap-star barber (Eve), the gangster barber (Michael Ealy), the white b-boy barber (Troy Garity), and an old guy who plays checkers all day. These characters bounce off each other according to type, but every now and then someone gets off an original line. The most impressive performance is given by Cedric the Entertainer. Made up to look like a latter-day Frederick Douglass, he's a raspy-voiced sage unafraid to take down Rosa Parks, of all people. His rants get the whole shop up in arms, with everyone cracking wise.—*Michael Agger* (Battery Park 16, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Metro Twin, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

BIGGIE & TUPAC
Nick Broomfield's guerrilla interviewing techniques—he barges into his subjects' lives, wielding his boom mike like a nightstick—and his thick British accent have served him well in the past ("Kurt & Courtney," "Heidi Fleiss: Hollywood Madam"). In his latest documentary, a look at the rivalry between the rappers Biggie Smalls and Tupac Shakur, his work reaches new heights of reckless fact-finding. With a naïveté that's truly disarming, he captures unrefined gangsta swagger, and his film digs into the unsolved murders of both musicians with a cheeky attitude that's smooth like butter.—*B.D.* (BAM Rose Cinemas, Cinema Village, and 42nd Street E Walk.)

CITY BY THE SEA
For long stretches, Robert De Niro, speaking in quiet, even tones, keeps this dolorous family melodrama on track. He plays Vincent LaMarca, a successful Manhattan homicide detective. His father was a convicted child murderer, and his son, Joey (James Franco), whom he hasn't seen in years, is a junkie living like a rat in an abandoned casino on the boardwalk of Long Beach, Long Island. As if all these troubles weren't enough, Joey kills a drug dealer in a fight, and then is suspected by the police of also killing a cop. Even though the story is based in fact, "City by the Sea" offers an almost grotesque pileup of tragedies. Will Vincent arrest his own son? Are the sins of the fathers visited upon the sons (or, in this case, grandsons)? Ken Hixon's screenplay lays in the Arthur Miller bricks very carefully. But when father and son get together at last, Hixon's writing falls into the turgid clichés of a TV drama. The end is a big letdown.—*D.D.* (9/9/02) (Battery Park 16, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

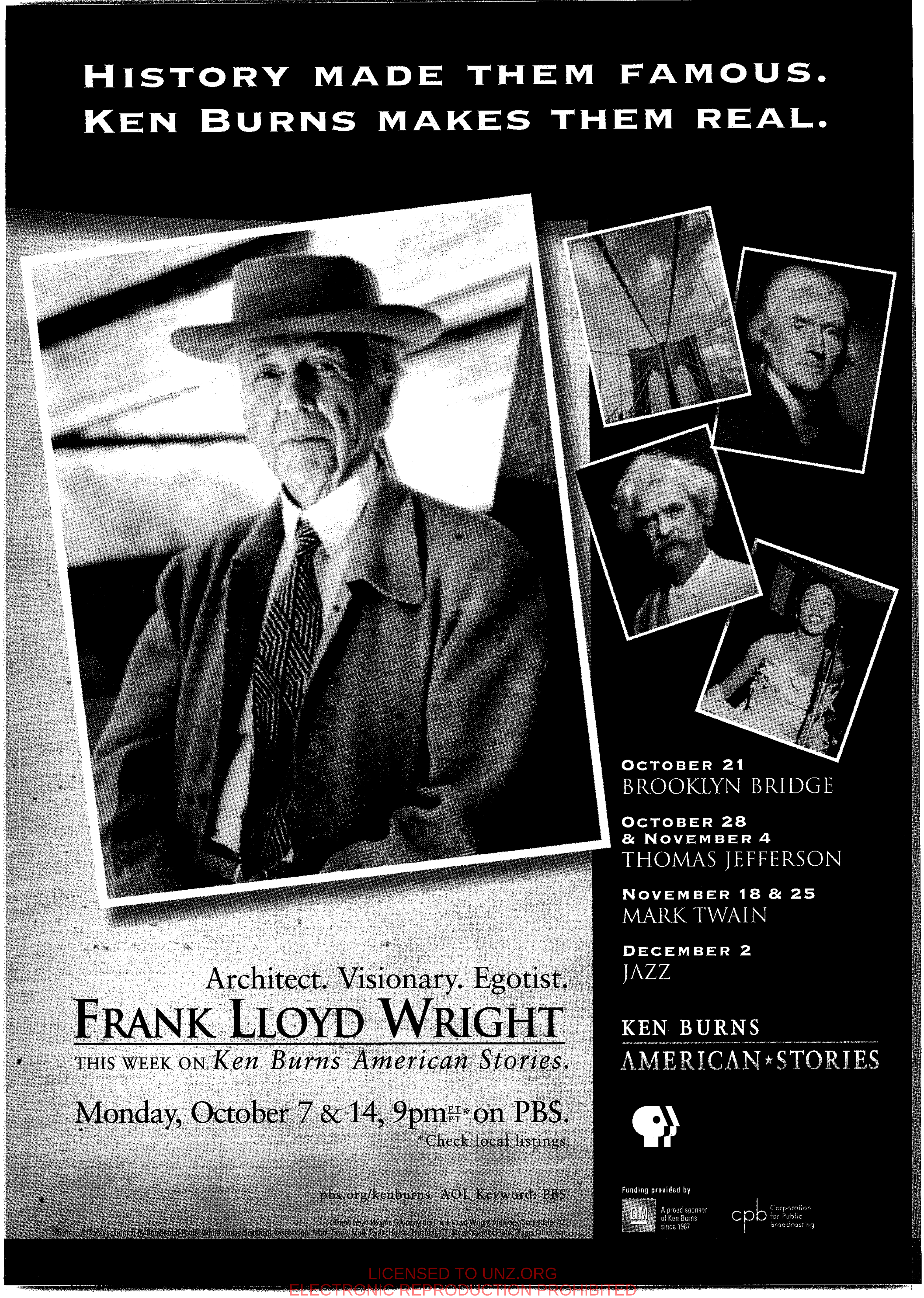
CLASH BY NIGHT
This 1952 Fritz Lang version of a Clifford Odets melodrama about jealousy never quite comes together; the stylized Odets dialogue seems bizarrely out of place in the setting of a fishing village. But it's a handsome black-and-white production, and, though Barbara Stanwyck (as the adulteress) and Paul Douglas (as the betrayed husband) suffer rather too strenuously, Robert Ryan (as the wife's lover, a projectionist in a movie theatre) is so intensely sexual that the film momentarily achieves real, even if stagey, power. And as a good-natured girl, full of animal high spirits, Marilyn Monroe is appealing in an unmannered style that's very different from her later acting.—*Pauline Kael* (BAM Rose Cinemas; Oct. 7-8.)

8 WOMEN
François Ozon's new picture is a tonic of sorts, a hot-hued, postmodern, murder-mystery musical hen party. The setting is virginal and unashamedly fake—a snowbound house interrupted by the arrival of a horde of famous French actresses. The wisest way to list them without giving offense is alphabetically: Fanny Ardant, Emmanuelle Béart, Danielle Darrieux, Catherine Deneuve, Isabelle Huppert, Virginie Ledoyen, Firmine Richard, and Ludivine Sagnier. For sheer fetishistic whoopee, there is very little to rival the sight of Deneuve and Ardant getting into a catfight, all hisses and claws, and then sinking to the floor to stroke each other's whiskers. Ozon plainly worships the idea of the grande dame, and the movie allows him both to honor and deride his own devotion. There's lots of dancing, a striptease, and a surfeit of arch self-consciousness. Yet something of substance does creep through this concoction. In the competitive jostling of the women, we sense the eternal face-off of beauty against the beast of time. Nobody is more touching in this regard than Darrieux, her soft wrinkles unable to erode the exquisite heroines she once incarnated for Max Ophuls. In French.—*Anthony Lane* (9/16/02) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Sunshine Cinema.)

THE FOUR FEATHERS
The story has been filmed four times, so why choose this moment for a fresh assault? Set in the late Victorian Age, the movie tells of a group of young British officers who go off to fight for Queen and country in the Sudan. When their commander describes the enemy as "Muhammadan fanatics," a frisson is presumably meant to run through the theatre. The film, directed by Shekhar Kapur, labors hard to match bravery against the follies of imperial rule, but the miscasting is almost impressive in its range. Kate Hudson has a wholly modern air that no layers of costume can stifle, while Heath Ledger, being Australian, has the openness and unstarched humor that people, then as now, left England in order to acquire. Alex Jennings gets the period snap right as the iron-backed Colonel Hamilton, and Djimon Hounsou is a convincingly charismatic tribesman. But, by this time, the movie has already collapsed, and there are stretches when coherence becomes a distant dream.—*A.L.* (9/30/02) (Battery Park 16, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 72nd Street East, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

THE GOOD GIRL
A comedy, darkly told, with a plot that never fails to attract: is there a way out of my narrow life? Jennifer Aniston puts on a Texas accent and plays Justine Last, a clerk at a faceless superstore. Her co-workers include a sarcastic goth girl (Zooey Deschanel), a hyper-Christian security guard (Mike White), and a hunky, teen-age malcontent (Jake Gyllenhaal) who writes fiction. Soon, Justine and Gyllenhaal's character are discovering the pleasures of the stockroom together. The movie is well acted and very funny about delusions, especially the writerly kind. It also complicates our loyalties by making Justine's husband (John C. Reilly) a decent, likable guy, even if he does smoke too much pot. Everything seems poised for a great finale, with the melancholic afterglow of a good Raymond Carver story. But the movie loses its tone—tragic moments, including a suicide, get treated in a flimsy way, and camp triumphs over content. Directed by Miguel Arteta and written by White.—*M.A.* (Battery Park 16, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kew Gardens Cinema, Kips Bay Theatre, 34th Street Theatre, and Village East Cinemas.)

GREED
"He can't make small of me!" the burly dentist McTeague (Gibson Gowland) screams at the San Francisco saloongoers who see his best friend throw a knife at him. But McTeague's buddy, Marcus (Jean Hersholt), can make small of him, and does. The director, Erich von Stroheim, manages to make his characters small and big simultaneously in this 1924



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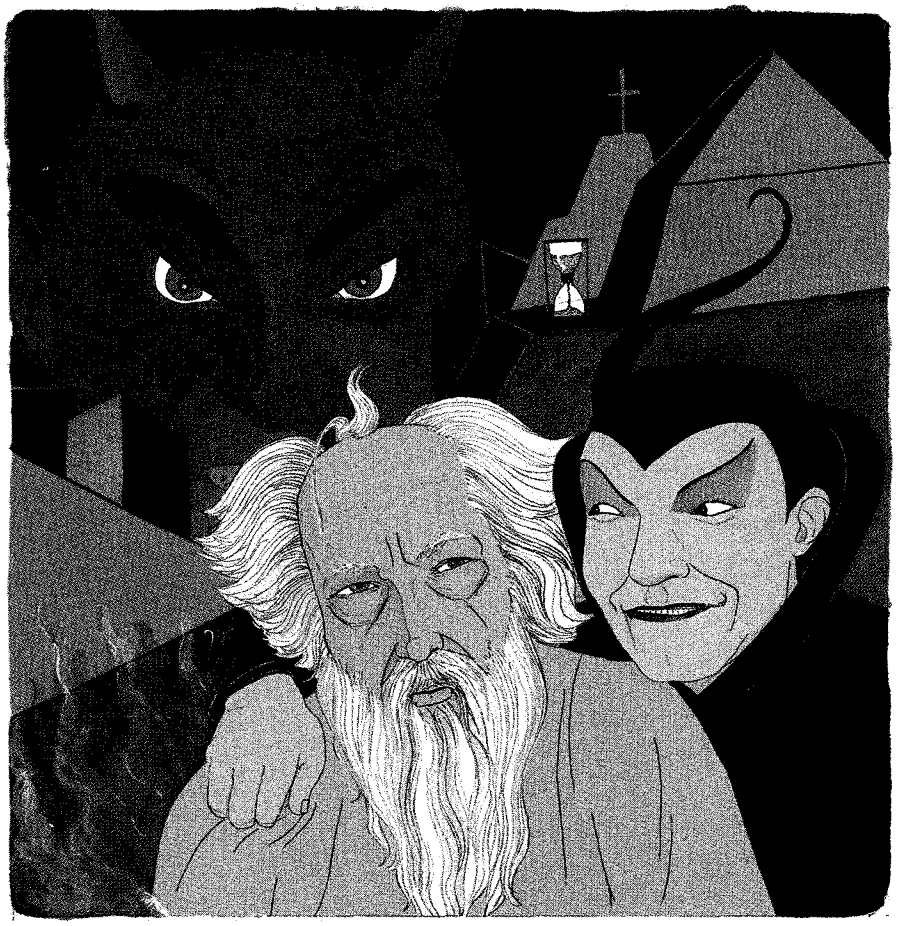


At Walter Reade Theatre, a presentation of F. W. Murnau's long-unavailable masterpiece, "Faust," starring Gösta Ekman and Emil Jannings.

LARA TOMLIN

film. He uncovers creatures of the id buried in these avaricious men and in a woman who starts out as Marcus's girl and becomes McTeague's wife: the proper, increasingly miserly Trina (ZaSu Pitts). The three friends' twisted money lust and sexuality send them into a death spiral that ends with a nightmarish showdown in Death Valley. M-G-M's production chief, Irving Thalberg, had von Stroheim's epic adaptation of Frank Norris's 1899 novel, "McTeague," chopped to a quarter of its original nine-hour length, and the studio cut is the only version that has survived. But it remains the benchmark of movie naturalism—veracious and harrowing.—*Michael Sragow* (Thalia Theatre; Oct. 6.)

IGBY GOES DOWN

A drama that treads deep into the heart of Salinger country: Kieran Culkin is Igby, late of military school, now sulking in Manhattan and running amok with his mother's credit card. Burr Steers, in his début as a writer-director, seems to remember only Holden Caulfield's alienation, and none of the self-scrutiny—the sense that rebellion is a pose like any other—which makes that novel more than just a kiss-off. The movie has a cold and sour take on the rich and feckless, and the decision to open the film with Igby and his brother (Ryan Phillippe) euthanizing their mother (Susan Sarandon) doesn't exactly leave a lot of room to maneuver. There are a few affecting scenes with Igby's mentally unstable father (Bill Pullman), but none of the nuanced emotional progression that the story needs to have genuine impact. With Claire Danes as a Bennington poetess and Amanda Peet as a SoHo mistress.—*M.A.* (BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, and Union Square.)

IN PRAISE OF LOVE

The new film from Jean-Luc Godard is carved into two halves. The first is in gliding, rapturous monochrome, the second in angry color, all the more jagged for being shot on digital video. From that contrast springs the whole endeavor. Godard is caught, as so often, between elegy and protest—between a lament for certain ideals, private and political, and splenetic digs at prevailing cultural conditions. There is a story—we follow a dour sort called Edgar (Bruno Putzulu), who is himself trying to cast a movie on the subject of changing love—but the narrative is so diluted that you can't help sensing Godard's indifference to the fates of his characters. Instead, his passion seems to be given over to chastising Hollywood for its abuse of history; America at large also takes a beating, apparently on the ground that the place is not old enough. (What exactly is any country supposed to do about that?) Yet the work, like most of Godard, asks to be seen; its strains of regret tug at you, and hang around in the mind, with a persistence rare in more coherent pictures. In French.—*A.L.* (9/2/02) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Village East Cinemas.)

LAWRENCE OF ARABIA

If you went to see it under the delusion that it was going to be about T. E. Lawrence, you probably stayed to enjoy the vastness of the desert and the pleasures of the senses that a huge movie epic can provide. Directed by David Lean, from a script by Robert Bolt, this 1962 picture fails to give an acceptable interpretation of Lawrence, or to keep its action intelligible, but it is one of the most literate and tasteful and exciting of expensive spectacles. The central figure is played quite stunningly by Peter O'Toole, though he seems to be doing Lord Jim—which he was cast in a couple of years later (and then it looked as if he were doing Lawrence all over again). Bolt and Lean turn the hero into such a flamboyant poetic enigma that he is displaced in the film by a simpler hero—Omar Sharif's Ali, a handsome sheik with liquid brown eyes and conventionally sympathetic lines to speak. Ali, an old-fashioned movie hero, was more at home in what, despite the literacy, was a big action movie. And as it became apparent that most people in the audience hadn't the remotest idea of what the Arabs and the Turks were doing in the First World War, or which was which, or why the English cared, the question raised by the movie was: can complicated historical events and a complex hero really get across in a spectacle? Fortunately for this particular spectacle, audiences seemed to be satisfied with the explanation that the Turks were more cruel than the Arabs, and although the movie's Lawrence became cruel, too, there was warmhearted Ali to take over.—*P.K.* (Ziegfeld.)

MERCI POUR LE CHOCOLAT

One to catch before it slips out of theatres. Claude Chabrol lays out a civilized web of deception in the Swiss countryside, where a young woman named Jeanne (Anna Mouglalis) discovers that she may have been switched at birth and presents herself to her possible father, André Polonski (Jacques Dutronc). They both turn out to be pianists—a hint, but not a conclusive one—and as they work together on perfecting Liszt's "Funérailles," Chabrol brings events to a slow, excruciating boil. The heat is applied by a performance that could not be more cool. Isabelle Huppert, as Polonski's first and third wife (long story), conceals her murderous intentions with an affectless gaze that's utterly sinister. Suspense builds the old-fashioned way: we know she will strike, but when? In French.—*M.A.* (Cinema Village.)

MY BIG FAT GREEK WEDDING

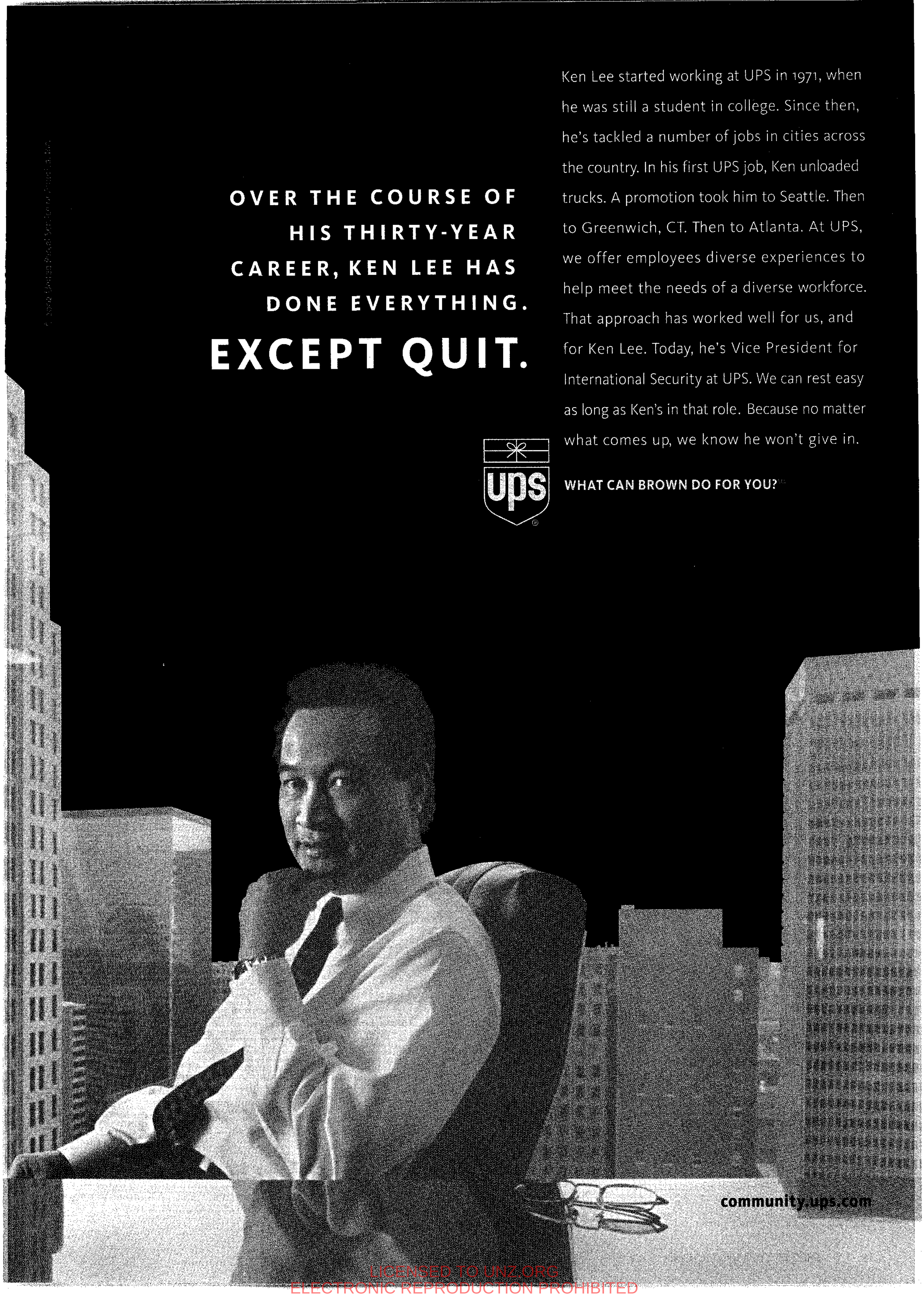
This small, inexpensively made independent movie has become a commercial phenomenon, drawing out homebound older moviegoers who had largely been resigned to watching sitcoms. The trouble is, the movie is not all that different from a sitcom. Nia Vardalos, who developed the material from her own experience, is Toula, a thirty-year-old unmarried "seating hostess" at a restaurant run by her Greek-American family in Chicago. The family considers Toula a disgrace and pursues her like the Furies, hounding her with lousy advice and overloaded plates of lamb and baklava. When a blandly handsome Wasp named Ian (John Corbett) enters the scene and begins dating Toula, the family goes haywire. The director, Joel Zwick, has a gentle touch: some of the behavior onscreen may be crass, but the movie itself isn't crassly made. The conventionality of it all is depressing, though. With Michael Constantine as the self-pitying, tyrannical head of the family, Lainie Kazan as Toula's mother, and the expert needle-nosed farceur Andrea Martin as one of the lamb-bearing aunts.—*D.D.* (9/23/02) (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kew Gardens Cinema, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Twin, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 34th Street Theatre, and Village East Cinemas.)

ONE HOUR PHOTO

Robin Williams in serious mode, playing a nowhere man—Sy Parrish, the photo guy at the mall, who wears wire-frame glasses, a white shirt, and a tie clip that we're meant to take as a kind of emotional chastity belt. Sy becomes unhealthily obsessed with a young and beautiful suburban family—wayward father (Michael Vartan), good mom (Connie Nielsen), and adorable young son (Dylan Smith)—and plasters his wall at home with extra prints of their family snaps. Mark Romanek's psychological thriller features sterile white environments and lots of shots in which Williams is grimly isolated in sinister, hospital-like sets. The movie's experimental tone, however, doesn't disguise a rather low-grade and unpleasant form of suspense. Romanek is caught between making Sy dangerous and making him sympathetic, but any terror or pity we might feel gets crimped by the film's queasy narrative logic, which keeps us in the dark about Sy's nature right down to the unsatisfactory final scene.—*D.D.* (Battery Park 16, Chelsea West, Cinema 2, Empire 25, Kew Gardens Cinema, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

ORPHANS OF THE STORM

It's almost unbelievable, but this D. W. Griffith spectacle set during the French Revolution was not a financial success. It's a marvellous, expensively produced mixture of melodrama and sentimentality, with duels, kidnappings, the storming of the Bastille, and Lillian Gish being saved from the guillotine. It's not one of Griffith's greatest; in a way, it seems dated, even for a 1921 movie. (Not in its technique—in its thinking.) But those who saw it as children never forgot the sequence in which Lillian hears the voice of her long-lost blind sister, played by Dorothy Gish. Griffith sequences like this go



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beyond heart-wringing into some arena of theatrical sublimity.—*P.K.* (Moving Image; Oct. 5.)

SECRETARY
A comic porno-fantasy shot by the director Steven Shainberg in a slow, dreamy, neo-De Palma style with a candy-colored palette. Maggie Gyllenhaal is a masochistic girl who finds happiness working for a creepy lawyer (James Spader) who regularly whacks her on the fanny. Gyllenhaal has a Kewpie-doll silliness that almost makes the naughty parts of the movie fun, but Shainberg takes forever to get the story going and lacks the stylistic panache to pull off his pain-is-liberation premise. The movie is a piece of brazen anti-feminism that says, "If pain is your thing, you go, girl!"—*D.D.* (9/23/02) (Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, and Lincoln Square.)

SHANGHAI GHETTO
A little-known and amazing chapter of Holocaust history—the plight of European Jewish refugees who fled to Japanese-occupied Shanghai in the late nineteen-thirties—gets an emotional documentary retelling. Five of the survivors of the impoverished Jewish community are interviewed with great care, and the filmmakers round out their tale with archival footage, letters, and photographs. All in all, a miraculous revival of the rich cultural life that developed amidst the squalor of a foreign, hostile land.—*B.D.* (Quad Cinema.)

SPIRITED AWAY
In his native Japan, the animator-director Hayao Miyazaki is considered a national treasure, and this movie, which he came out of retirement to complete, recently surpassed "Titanic" as that country's highest-grossing picture. It's an amazing work, filled with a visual intelligence that's meticulously composed and obscenely clever. Miyazaki's playful aesthetic is like a Japanese word that can't be adequately translated, best approximated as part Spielberg, part Dr. Seuss. So-called mature American audiences may be put off at first by a film that is essentially a cartoon about a fearful ten-year-old girl. But as the hero, Chihiro, sees her parents turned into swine and flees into an alternate world filled with the creatures of Japanese mythology and of Miyazaki's own invention, any distracting sense of childishness falls away. Left to savor are virtuoso touches, like a flock of birds that becomes useless paper, a train that glides along the surface of a lake, and one of the great villains of all time, Yubaba, who looks like a bobble-headed grandmother on speed.—*M.A.* (East 86th Street Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, and Sunshine Cinema.)

SWEET HOME ALABAMA
Among the many talents of Reese Witherspoon is the ability to hang around in movies that are unworthy of her, and thus to shine all the brighter. After "Legally Blonde," she's chosen to play yet another fish out of water: Melanie, a fashion designer with a guy problem and a background problem. Andrew (Patrick Dempsey) wants to make her his bride, but standing in her way is Andrew's ice-queen mother (Candice Bergen), who's also the mayor of New York, and the unpleasant fact that she's already married to Jake (Josh Lucas), the love of her former life in Alabama, who is now covered in facial hair and engine oil. Reese may want to forget this trifle by Christmas, yet the movie allows her to sharpen her grasp of a steely American type: the girl next door who will kill to get out of town.—*A.L.* (9/30/02) (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Olympia I and II, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

THE TRIALS OF HENRY KISSINGER
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Film Forum.)

ALSO PLAYING

DAS EXPERIMENT
Angelika Film Center, Empire 25, and Village East Cinemas.

INVINCIBLE
Angelika Film Center and Cinema 3.

THE LAST KISS (8/5/02)
Kew Gardens Cinema, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Sunshine Cinema.

MOONLIGHT MILE
Angelika Film Center, Empire 25, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, and Village East Cinemas.

MOSTLY MARTHA
Angelika Film Center, Kew Gardens Cinema, and Paris.

THE PINOCHET CASE
Film Forum.

THE TUXEDO
Battery Park 16, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn.
Battery Park 16, West St. at Vesey St.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinemas 1, 2, and 3, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363).
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (398-3939).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Kew Gardens Cinema, 81-05 Lefferts Blvd., Queens (718-441-9835).
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St. (757-2280).
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Metro Twin, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
Sunshine Cinema, 139-143 E. Houston St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th Street Theatre, 312 W. 34th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Through Oct. 27: "Hollywood Independents: A History of United Artists." Oct. 5 at 1:30: "Orphans of the Storm" (†), with live piano accompaniment. ♦ Oct. 5 at 4: "City Lights" (1931, Charles Chaplin). ♦ Oct. 6 at 2: "Thief of Bagdad" (1924, Raoul Walsh), with live piano accompaniment. ♦ Oct. 6 at 5: "Pollyanna" (1920, Paul Powell). ♦ Repertory nights. Oct. 5-6 at 6:30: "The Wild Child" (1970, François Truffaut; in French).

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5181)—Oct. 2-6: "Nina Hagen: Punk & Glory" (1999, Peter Sempel). ♦ Oct. 4-6: "Dandy" (1988, Sempel). ♦ Oct. 5-6: "Lemmy" (2002, Sempel).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-777-3456)—Oct. 3 at 7: "Ten Minutes Older: The Trumpet" (2002, Victor Erice, Werner Herzog, Jim Jarmusch, Spike Lee, Wim Wenders, Aki Kaurismäki, and Chen Kaige). ♦ The films of Victor Erice. Oct. 4 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "El Sur" (1982; in Spanish). ♦ Oct. 5 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Spirit of the Beehive" (1973; in Spanish). ♦ Oct. 6 at 2, 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "The Dream of Light" (1992; in Spanish). ♦ The American cinema of Fritz Lang. Oct. 7-8 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Clash by Night" (†).

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—Through Oct. 10: A William Wyler retrospective. Oct. 2 at 3:30 and 7:20: "Mrs. Miniver" (1942). ♦ Oct. 2 at 2:15, 6, and 9:45: "Directed by William Wyler" (1986, Aviva Slesin). ♦ Oct. 4 at 1, 5:30, and 10 and Oct. 5 at 1, 3:10, 5:20, 7:35, and 9:50: "Roman Holiday" (1953). ♦ Oct. 4 at 3:15 and 7:40: "How to Steal a Million" (1966). ♦ Oct. 6 at 1:20, 4:20, and 7:20 and Oct. 7 at 1:20 and 4:20: "Funny Girl" (1968). ♦ Oct. 7 at 7:15 and 10:10: "The Storm" (1930). ♦ Oct. 7 at 8:45: "Her First Mate" (1933). ♦ Oct. 8 at 3:30 and 8: "Friendly Persuasion" (1956). ♦ Oct. 8 at 1:30 and 6: "The Liberation of L. B. Jones" (1970). ♦ Special event: Twelve restored Vitaphone shorts. Oct. 3 at 1, 4:40, and 8:20. ♦ Oct. 3 at 3, 6:40, and 10:20: A restored print of Michael Curtiz's "Mammy" (1930).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL
55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—Through Dec. 17: Neo-noir films. Oct. 8 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "Série Noire" (1979, Alain Corneau; in French).

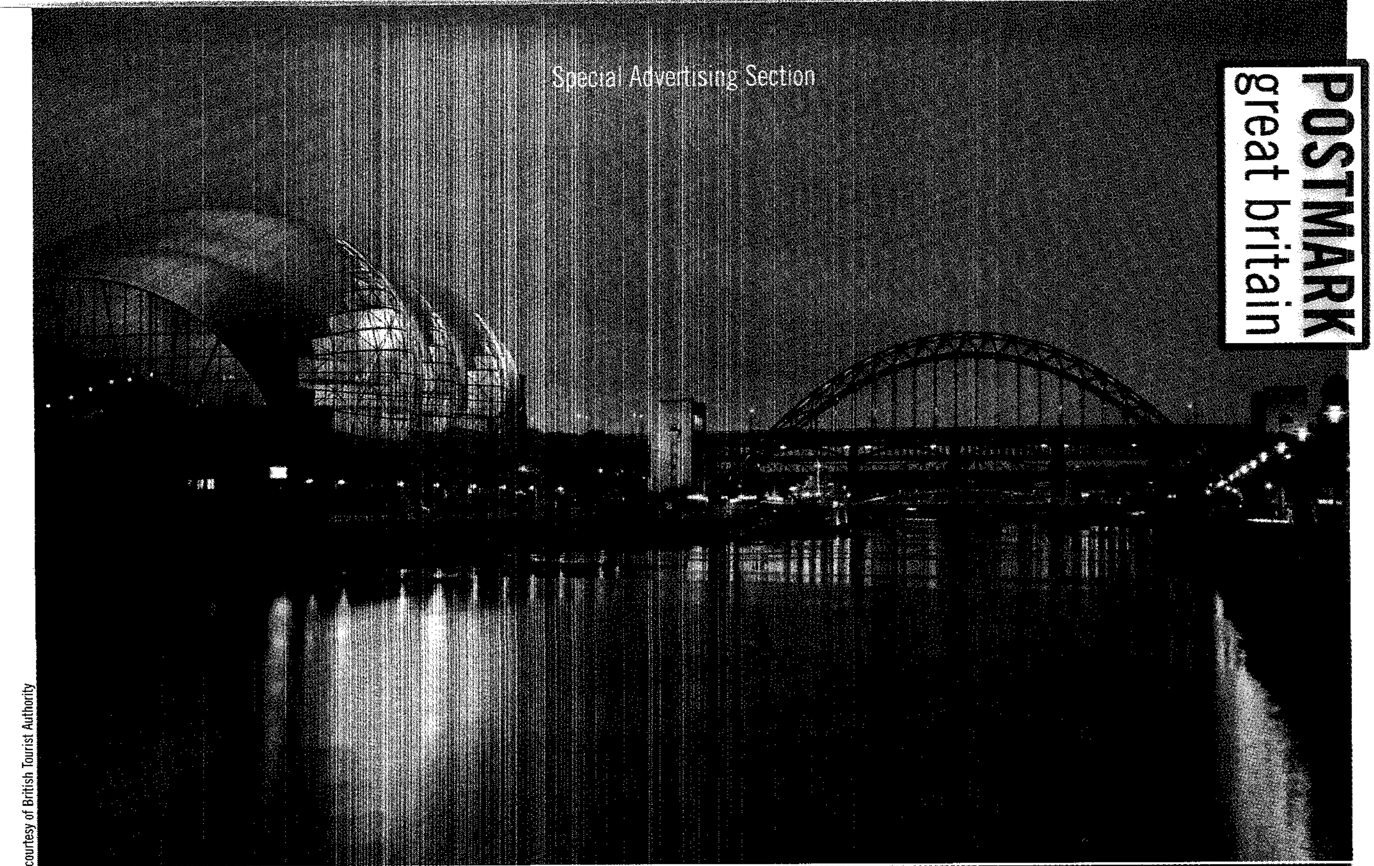
THE NEW YORK FILM FESTIVAL
Lincoln Center (875-5050)—Through Oct. 13: New films. Oct. 2 at 6 and Oct. 3 at 9: "Bloody Sunday" (2002, Paul Greengrass). ♦ Oct. 2 at 9 and Oct. 3 at 6: "The Man Without a Past" (2002, Aki Kaurismäki; in Finnish). ♦ Oct. 4 at 6 and Oct. 6 at 1:30: "My Mother's Smile" (2002, Marco Bellocchio; in Italian). ♦ Oct. 4 at 9 and Oct. 5 at 2: "Auto Focus" (2002, Paul Schrader). ♦ Oct. 5 at 5 and Oct. 6 at 7:30: "Springtime in a Small Town" (2002, Tian Zhuangzhuang; in Mandarin). ♦ Oct. 5 at 8 and 11: "Punch-Drunk Love" (2002, Paul Thomas Anderson). ♦ Oct. 6 at 4:30: "Turning Gate" (2002, Sang-soo Hong; in Korean). ♦ Oct. 7 at 6: "Waiting for Happiness" (2002, Abderrahmane Sissako; in French). ♦ Oct. 7 at 9: "Divine Intervention" (2002, Elia Suleiman; in Arabic and Hebrew). ♦ Oct. 8 at 8:45: "Safe Conduct" (2002, Bertrand Tavernier; in French).

SCANDINAVIA HOUSE
58 Park Ave. (847-9746)—The films of Jan Troell. Oct. 2 at 6:30: "The New Land" (1970; in Swedish). ♦ Oct. 9 at 6:30: "Il Capitano" (1991; in Swedish).

SUNSHINE CINEMA
139-143 E. Houston St. (358-0573)—Midnight movies. Oct. 4-5: "Rosemary's Baby" (1968, Roman Polanski).

THALIA THEATRE
2537 Broadway, at 95th St. (864-5400)—Oct. 5 at 2 and 7: "The Devil Is a Woman" (1935, Josef Von Sternberg). ♦ Oct. 5 at 3:30 and 8:30: "Lolita" (1962, Stanley Kubrick). ♦ Oct. 6 at 2 and 7: "The Postman Always Rings Twice" (1946, Tay Garnett). ♦ Oct. 6 at 4:15 and 9:15: "Greed" (†).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (875-5600)—Through Oct. 10: "The Actor as Activist: Celebrating Shabana Azmi." Unless otherwise noted, all films are in Hindi. Oct. 2 at 4 and 9: "The Ruins" (1983, Mrinal Sen). ♦ Oct. 2 at 6:45: "Kamla" (1985, Jagmohan Mundhra). ♦ Oct. 3 at 4 and 8:45 and Oct. 4 at 6:30: "In Custody" (1993, Ismail Merchant). ♦ Oct. 3 at 6:30 and Oct. 4 at 9:15: "Fire" (1996, Deepa Mehta; in English and Hindi). ♦ Oct. 4 at 3:30 and Oct. 6 at 5:15: "Death Sentence" (1997, Prakash Jha). ♦ Oct. 6 at 2 and Oct. 7 at 6:20: "Mandi" (1983, Shyam Benegal). ♦ Oct. 6 at 8:15: "The Seedling" (1973, Benegal). ♦ Oct. 7 at 4 and 9:30 and Oct. 8 at 6:15: "Immaculate Conception" (1992, Jamil Dehlavi; in English). ♦ Oct. 8 at 3:30 and 8:30: "Anjuman" (1986, Muzaffar Ali). ♦ Special event. Oct. 5 at 4 and 8: A restored print of F. W. Murnau's "Faust" (1926).



courtesy of British Tourist Authority

Gateshead Quays, the ambitious arts, leisure, and residential development is set on the River Tyne in the north of England. On the left is Sage Gateshead, a multipurpose music center to open in 2004.

great expectations

by Andrew Bill

Now that Britain's summer frenzy has given way to a more leisurely pace, there are even more compelling arguments than usual for jumping "the pond." In addition to easier access to U.K.'s hottest restaurants and plays, the stellar lineup of quintessentially British attractions is better than ever.

The Victoria and Albert Museum, for instance, has reopened the **British Galleries**. Overflowing with thousands of objects and dedicated to British design from 1500 to 1900, these fifteen rooms on two floors are packed with innovative displays. One such room holds reproductions of historic clothing and accessories you can try on. But don't get distracted: Be sure to look for James II's wedding suit and the Great Bed of Ware, mentioned in Shakespeare's "Twelfth Night." The Natural History Museum's **Darwin Centre**—never before accessible to the public—has a collection of twenty-two million zoological specimens including river sharks recently discovered in Borneo. Daily tours take visitors through once off-limits storerooms, past scientists laboring in their labs. As part of the Centre's daily talks and demonstrations, the public can chat with scientists about their work.

Remember the **Millennium Bridge**, the glittering footbridge that spanned the Thames and opened to great fanfare, only to shut down in shame because it wobbled in the wind? It's stable now and you can use it to stroll over to the Tate Modern or to catch Shakespeare at a faithful replica of the Globe Theatre on London's once-industrial, now culturally thriving Bankside area. While you're there, you won't miss the brightly colored fuchsia and burnt orange **Fashion & Textile Museum**, set to open in March 2003. Founded by fashion icon Zandra Rhodes (known for her bold use of colors and shapes), the museum will feature rotating exhibits of the best in vintage and modern fashion, as well as textile design.

Through December, the **String of Pearls Festival** highlights seventy landmarks on both sides of the Thames, many open to the public for the first time. Included

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is the **Foreign and Commonwealth Office**. With its Locarno Suite (glittering gold ceilings), and its Durbar Court (arches, columns, mosaics, and a glass roof soaring eighty feet above the marble floor), it's one of London's most impressive buildings. Visit StringOfPearls.org.uk for the latest updates.

London and theatre are inseparable. The hot ticket this fall—a revival of Tennessee Williams' **A Streetcar Named Desire**—runs from October 8th to November 23rd at the National Theatre. Directed by Trevor Nunn, it stars Glenn Close in her British stage début. Most tickets for the run, however, are sold-out. There's also Brian Friel's latest, **Afterplay**, with John Hurt and Penelope Wilton, at the Gielgud. October 15th, the curtain lifts on **The Breath of Life** by David Hare, with Dames Judi Dench and Maggie Smith at the Theatre Royal Haymarket, while murder and intrigue are given an airing in Shakespeare's **Macbeth**, starting November 14th at the Albery Theatre, with Sean Bean ("Lord of the Rings").

Intriguing art exhibitions abound. Old Masters from the collection of Sir Robert Walpole are at the **Hermitage Rooms, Somerset House** through February 23rd. This is the first time a majority of these works, by artists such as Rembrandt, Rubens, and Van Dyck, have been shown in England since Catherine the Great acquired them more than two hundred years ago. Some ninety paintings from the renowned Swiss-based Merzbacher Collection, including eight landscapes by Kandinsky, and works by Van Gogh, Matisse, and Picasso are up through November 17th at the **Royal Academy of Arts**.

British cuisine—no longer a contradiction in terms—is drawing increasing accolades. If you can secure the reservations, visit **Locanda Locatelli**, in the Churchill Inter-Continental Hotel or **Gordon Ramsay** in Claridge's. Other don't misses: Nico Ladenis's **Deca** for New French fare; **E&O**, a chic Notting Hill spot; and unconventional **Les Trois Garçons**, a converted Victorian pub packed with antiques, all for sale. Log on to SquareMeal.co.uk for information on the best new restaurants.

London's reputation as Europe's shopping capital is underscored with such boutiques as **Angela Hale** in the Royal Arcade on Old Bond Street, where supermodels make their bauble purchases. Meanwhile in The City, as London's financial district is known, **The Royal Exchange** offers the newest upscale shopping experience. Tiffany and a host of other U.K. and European stores are housed in this historic building, first opened by Elizabeth I. **Liberty**, long famous for its hand-blocked scarves, fabrics, and men's ties in the Arts and Crafts style, has given its flagship Regent Street store a multimillion-pound makeover. Alongside its traditional offerings, Liberty now has the latest in ready-to-wear from such houses as Miyake and Balenciaga, along with a new lingerie department and other additions.

Andrew Bill is a British-born travel journalist currently living in New York.

courtesy of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park

Central to Scottish folksongs and history, this resplendent freshwater lake is now a part of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park.

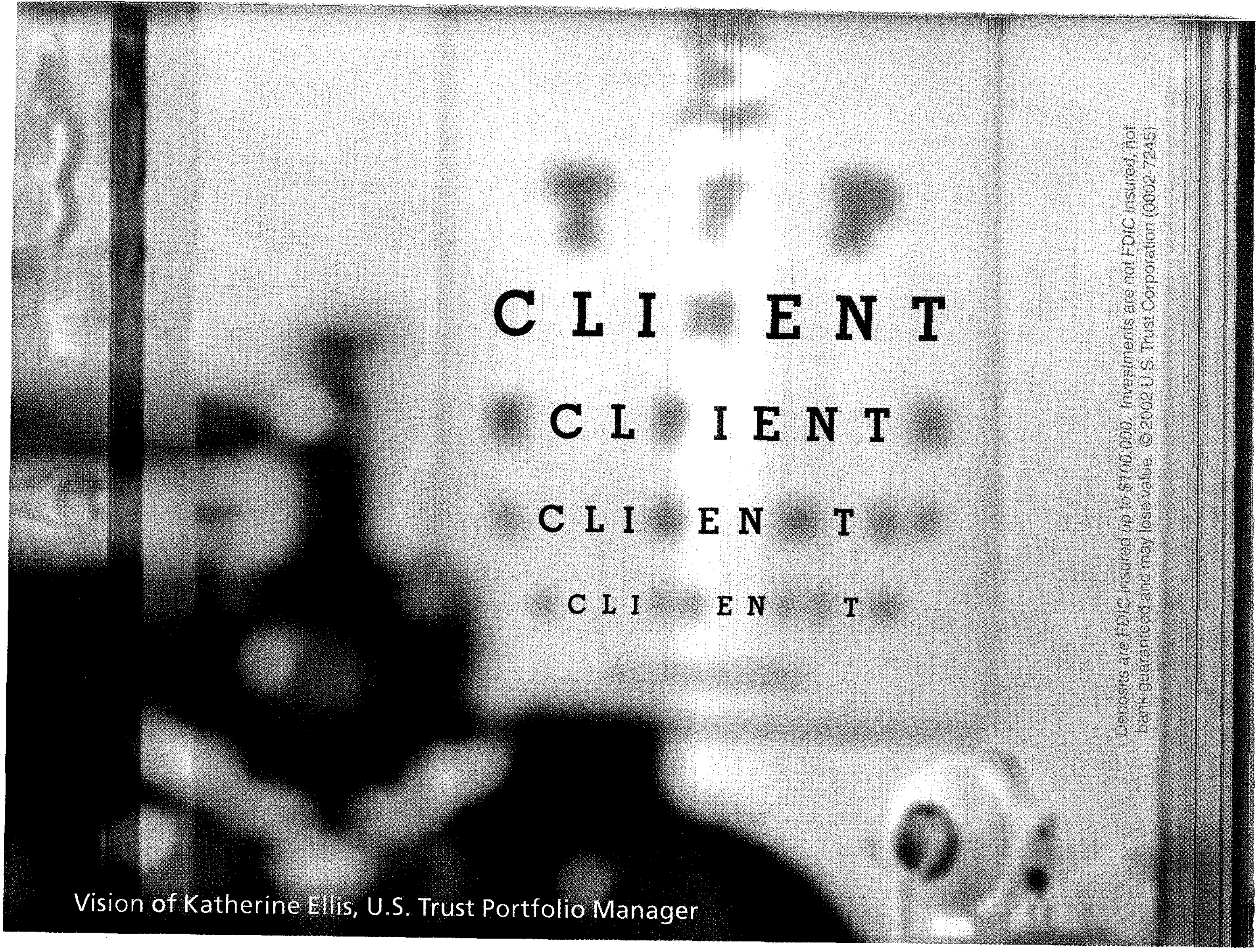
For more information call the British Tourist Authority at 877-899-8391 or visit TravelBritain.org

beyond london

Those venturing beyond the capital soon discover that the entire U.K. is undergoing a renaissance. A case in point is **Gateshead Quays**, a former industrial area near Newcastle. With renovations costing more than a billion dollars, the old docks offer a spectacular bridge spanning the Tyne, countless upscale shops, a music center by Norman Foster opening in 2004, and **Baltic, The Centre for Contemporary Art**, a converted grain warehouse that has become Europe's largest space for temporary exhibits. Billing itself as an "art factory," Baltic rotates its exhibition schedule every six weeks to three months.

Manchester is also bustling with excitement, generated in part by its burgeoning museum scene. **Urbis**, set in an environment of shimmering glass, explores life in the world's great cities from Tokyo to Los Angeles. A short Metrolink ride away is **The Lowry**, a major arts venue unveiled in 2000. Linked by a footbridge, **The Imperial War Museum North** focusses on British battles from 1914 to the present. An architectural marvel, it's housed in an aluminum structure designed to resemble a globe shattered by conflict.

It's not just Britain's cities that are primping; even its countryside is laying out the welcome mat. Scotland's **Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park** opened this past July and forever protects the lyric mountain-and-lake beauty of Loch Lomond and the surrounding Trossachs in Central Scotland. Coming to Scotland's Central Highlands in Spring 2003 will be the U.K.'s largest national park, **The Cairngorms**. It promises some two thousand square miles of pine forest and heathery moors. A few hours drive from London, Wales is also confirming its reputation among nature lovers. **The National Botanic Garden of Wales** near Carmarthen has the largest single-span glass house in the world and it's filled with threatened plants species from the Mediterranean region. Wales has also increased its top-shelf roster of walking trails with **Glyndwr's Way**, a 132-mile path wending through the Cambrian Mountains. **International Festival of Musical Theatre** in Cardiff, a celebration of popular music, will be staged in and around the city from October 14–November 3.



Vision of Katherine Ellis, U.S. Trust Portfolio Manager

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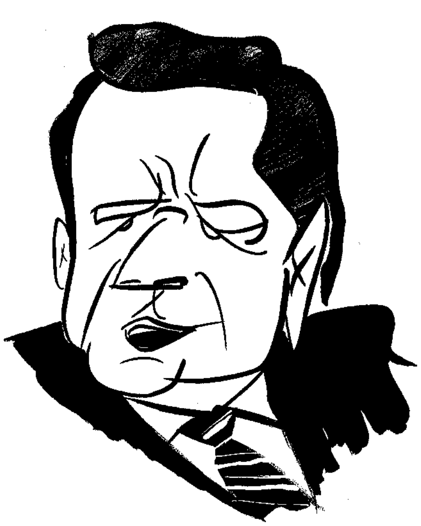
THE NEW YORKER
BALLOT

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
RESENTMENTS

Remember Germany four years ago? The Social Democrats were back. Gerhard Schröder had just been elected Chancellor. And the pundits were smiling, because Schröder seemed like such a plastic pastiche of a character, a bellwether of the liberal something-for-everyone-market Zeitgeist. He didn't talk about the kinds of things German Chancellors were supposed to talk about. The soul of Germany wasn't on his agenda. In fact, it was unclear that he had an agenda, given that he'd talked his way around every difficult campaign question. Clintonblair, the press called him—at least until he began to sound like his own man, or, rather, his version of Germany's man. Apart from his failure to tackle, or even try to tackle, Germany's crashing economy—his long goodbye from Helmut Kohl—he pieced together a pretty interesting administration. He put a suit and tie on the peaceable Green deputy Joschka Fischer and named him foreign minister, and Fischer turned into the crown prince of the Red-Green coalition, the face, and voice, of a new German presence in the real world—a "normal" presence, as Fischer called it. (The first German soldiers to be deployed abroad since the Second World War went off to the Balkans as peacekeeping forces, on Fischer's insistence.) He saw the Jacobin lurking in Otto Schily, a man who was still best known as the chief defense lawyer in the first of the Baader-Meinhof trials. He named Schily interior minister, and Schily gave him a no-nonsense, no-apologies, law-and-order ministry in the wake of the Al Qaeda attacks. The only ministers to cause the Chancellor much grief or embarrassment were the ones he hadn't wanted—the ones he'd owed to the factions of what was, even then, his very slim majority. He took them on, and, when the time was ripe, sent them packing or forced them to pack themselves. The last to go will be Herta Daubler-Gmelin, the justice minister who, only days before last week's election, alluded to George W. Bush and Adolf Hitler in the space of a few short sentences.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL



Gerhard Schröder

There's no doubt in Germany that the election was a three-way contest between two German politicians and one American President. But the people who saw Schröder as somehow transformed by his opposition to what he called Bush's "adventure" in Iraq couldn't have been following him very closely over the past four years. Schröder discovered the soul of Germany early on, and played it. He knew the resentments. The fact that Germans responded so compassionately to the tragedy of September 11th—"a quarter of a million Berliners gathered at the Brandenburg Gate in a show of solidarity with the victims," the German novelist Peter Schneider wrote in an apt reminder in the *Times* last week—doesn't alter the reality that in Germany, as in much of Europe, there is a great deal of resentment of the United States, and of its messianic high-handedness. "Schadenfreude" may be a German word, but it is not exclusively a German feeling. Some Germans explain the resentment by saying that for them history is "over." They mean that, for better or worse, they are now like other Europeans, and have the right to criticize Ariel Sharon without being accused of hating Jews, or George Bush without being accused of hating Americans. But it would be foolish to assume that "normalcy" has conquered all the myths of German exceptionalism. Not even Schröder assumes this. You don't need to be a genius to see that it's in those myths that the nationalist right and the nationalist left find common cause. It bears remembering that early last winter, when Schröder first asked the Bundestag to commit troops to Afghanistan, half the Greens in the coalition—the "fundamentalist" Greens—stonewalled. Their position was eerily reminiscent: Germans are different; they are pure; they are better than other people. It also bears remembering that Schröder stood his ground; he took a risk, turned deployment into what amounted to a vote of confidence, and won (and then saw to it that no German ground troops actually entered Afghanistan until a new government was in Kabul). This year, though, the imperatives of Germanness, military common sense, and international law happened to coincide. Bush had hardly bothered to consult his allies about his plans to attack Iraq—he simply announced them—and when his allies demurred he made it clear that he didn't care a fig what the allies thought, the allies were wrong. Of course, he now says pretty much the same thing about the Democrats in his own Senate.

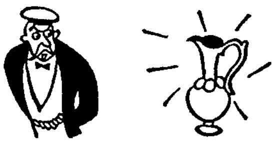
Schröder did make some dumb statements—some unilaterally dumb statements, like the one about never joining a U.N.-sponsored mission against Saddam Hussein, whatever the rest of Europe might decide. But, if some of what he said was crude campaign politics, a lot of it was Realpolitik. Schadenfreude aside, most Germans were alarmed by the prospect of a war of entitlement that could set off Islamist revolutions from Pakistan to Indonesia. It didn't take more than the thought of that war to persuade them to take their chances with a familiar and moderately successful Chancellor (not to mention with a foreign minister who now ranks as the country's most popular politician). Never mind that unemployment is at ten per cent and the unions are recalcitrant and the country is going bankrupt paying for the kind of social-welfare-benefits package that would probably make American workers emigrate, if they bothered to notice what was in it.

Politicians are not in politics to self-destruct, and, if Schröder has been less than diplomatic on the subject of George Bush, Bush made no secret of his hopes that an agreeably conservative government would again be installed in the Federal Republic. When Schröder was reëlected, instead, Bush went petulantly public with the news that he was not calling to offer the customary polite congratulations (and Andover be damned). He allowed Condoleezza Rice, his national-security adviser, to accuse the Germans of poisoning the alliance against terror, and Donald Rumsfeld to snub his German counterpart at last week's NATO defense ministers' meeting. It's useful to remember that, in the game of sticks and stones, it has been Bush brandishing the sticks and Schröder slinging the words. And, if Schröder miscalculated, it wasn't only about which words to use or how many of those words added up to a majority in his own parliament. It was about just how vindictive an American President could be, and what that could do to Germany. The irony of this soon-to-be-forgotten war of words may, in fact, be that Schröder's most serious miscalculation was about his own people. A leader who taps into the notion that Germans are "different" can end up having to deal with a lot of Germans who believe it.

—*Jane Kramer*

THE FRIENDLY SKIES

CARRY ON



There are things you can carry onto an airplane, and things you cannot. Since September 11th, various objects, and not just knives and guns, have been banned from the cabins of commercial flights: hockey sticks, corkscrews, cricket bats, toy transformer robots, and so on. For a while, knitting needles were on that list, but the Transportation Security Administration decided that they could not be considered weapons. In some airports, however, security personnel do have some discretion and must decide occasionally whether an item on your person or in your carry-on bag—say, an Emmy Award—poses a risk to captain and crew.

The Emmy statuette is a formidable instrument. Like the Oscar or the Golden Globe, it is quite heavy (four and three-quarter pounds) and would be effective as a bludgeon. What distinguishes it from other potentially weaponizable awards is the pair of wings that jut straight up from its shoulder blades. The wings, which measure six inches, are sharp-tipped and shaped like unserrated steak knives. The tips are about an inch and a half apart. By gripping the Emmy at its legs, a man could—and we're talking hypothetically here—do some serious stabbing, or threaten to do some serious stabbing. You'd be hard-pressed to find anyone who, in a gladiator-type situation, would not choose the Emmy over a corkscrew or a toy transformer robot.

Here's another thing about Emmys: not everyone who wins them lives in Los Angeles. A few Emmy-winners even live in New York. Since the ceremony is held in Los Angeles (this year's was the weekend before last), the elements would seem to be in place for a showdown, or at least a bother, at the terminal gate. But airport security screeners are learning that discretion requires context. "What they're concerned about are weapons and things that could be used as weapons," Brian Jenkins, an adviser to the RAND Corporation, who served on the Clinton White House's Commission on Aviation Safety and Security, said last week. "If someone can't come on the plane with tweezers, can he come on with something with two sharp six-inch points? You have to find some other basis for what is an entirely reasonable exception. That could be 'This is a statue, an object of art, which is given out in a public ceremony and carried by a celebrity.' "

Among the winners flying with their trophies back to New York was Robert Smigel, one of the twenty-three writers at "Saturday Night Live" who won Emmys. "I bubble-wrapped it, and I put it in a box," Smigel said. "I thought I'd have to check it, but, because it was bubble-wrapped and in a box, the people at the check-in counter told me that I'd be fine. And the guy at the X-ray machine just said, 'Hey, you won an Emmy! What'd you win for?' He was not concerned at all. I asked him, 'Are they gonna give me a hassle at the gate, on account of I look Middle Eastern anyway?' He didn't think so. And I didn't. I got lucky." Smigel boarded the flight and made it back to New York without incident.

After the awards ceremony, Rob Burnett, an executive producer of "Late Show with David Letterman," which also won an Emmy, went to the airport to catch the red-eye. Burnett ran through the terminal in his tuxedo, carrying his statuette in his left hand. "You couldn't feel like more of an idiot," he said. "At the security gate, there was a lot of attention paid to it, and a lot of scrutiny as well. You're putting it through the metal detector, and the security guy is simultaneously studying it and asking if he can hold it. Two completely different parts of the brain are accessed when you are trying to get an Emmy through airport security." While the plane was still at the gate, he was invited into the cockpit. The pilots wanted to see an Emmy. "And then they let me fly the plane over Missouri, which I thought was really sweet."

David Friend, an editor at *Vanity Fair*, who, along with Graydon Carter and others, won an Emmy as an executive producer of the documentary "9/11," sized up the statuette's pointy wings—"They looked like twin daggers!"—and decided to put it in his suitcase and check it. "I'm a bit of a worrywart," he said. "I didn't want the hassle." (Gedeon Naudet, the documentary's co-director, made it through security with two Emmys—his and his brother's—in a tote bag.) When Friend arrived at J.F.K., his car-service driver, Jocko, asked to see the Emmy, so Friend removed it from his suitcase, only to discover that, in the unpressurized hold of the plane, its base had collapsed. "I had a punctured-layer-cake Emmy," Friend said.

For now, it seems, you should consider an Emmy a carry-on item. Certainly, it would be difficult for terrorists to get one. They could steal one or forge one. "They could also develop a show for a network and try to win one," Burnett said. "But that can be very difficult."

—*Nick Paumgarten*

HIT AND RUN DEPT.
THE OLD BONG GAME

The New York Mets ended their lacklustre season this past weekend amid allegations of widespread marijuana use. The initial report didn't name names—of sources or of players—except for those of Tony Tarasco and Mark Corey, benchwarmers who a few months ago fessed up to a night of pot-smoking, and Grant Roberts, a relief pitcher who was shown doing a bong hit in a photograph provided to *Newsday* by an angry (and allegedly extortionary) Long Island woman. One "friend" of the team claimed that a player had had someone stow pot in peanut-butter jars to elude bomb-sniffing dogs at Shea, and another said that Mets minor leaguers buried their weed and accoutrements near hotels so that they could dig up the stash the next time they were in town.

High times for Mr. Met.

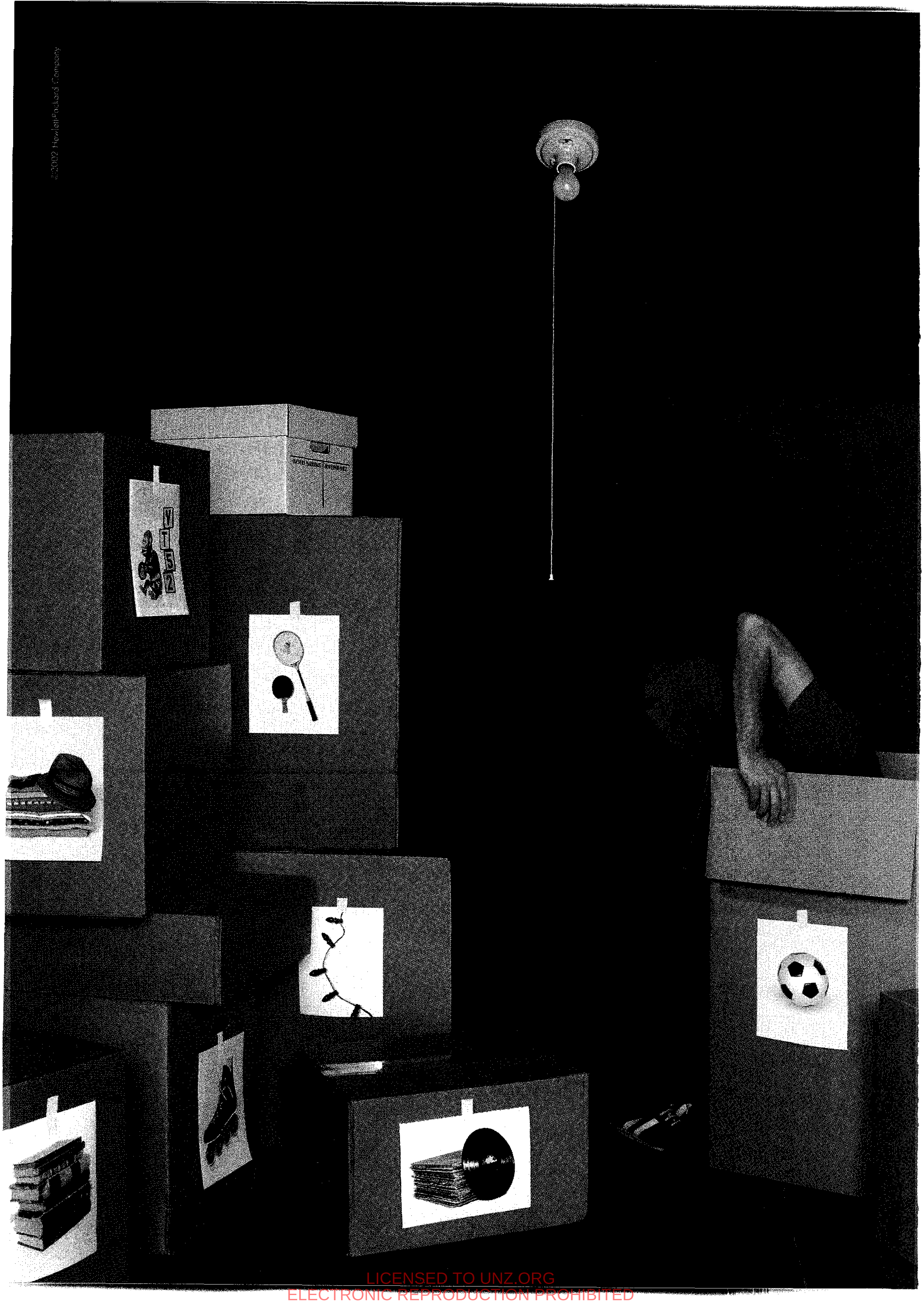
In the wake of these reports, columnists have observed that if the Mets had demonstrated the kind of energy on the field that they seem to have exerted in devising ways to get high, they might have had a shot at the pennant. At least, they probably would not have led the major leagues in errors. To some commentators, however, the connection between cannabis consumption and lacklustre performance is less clear. Steve Bloom is the manager of the softball team at *High Times*, a New York-based magazine for marijuana enthusiasts. Since 1996, the team, the Bonghitters, has gone 50–8–4, and only recently ended an amazing three-year winning streak. Bloom attributes this success to a disciplined regimen.

"Part of the secret for us personally is that we don't go out on the field too stoned," Bloom said the other day. "You don't smoke just before you go out on the field, 'cause you kinda lose your concentration. Baseball's a concentration game. People here may smoke during the day, doing whatever they're doing. I don't keep tabs on every player. And, you know, they may or may not wake 'n' bake. But, basically, we'll smoke one in the car on the way up to the game, and that's the extent of it. And then we go out and do our batting practice and play our game, and then maybe in the middle of the game, if we really feel so inspired or feel we need a rally joint or something, we light one up. But it's generally kind of an after-game thing.

"Not overdoing it is the best thing, when it comes to baseball," he went on. "Maybe in football and contact sports, where you're banging into each other, you'd feel it a little less. Or in basketball, where you're out there sort of instinctively doing things very quickly, moving very fast. With baseball, you're standing around the outfield for days, you know. It's easy to zone out. You gotta run from first to third when there's one out and the ball's hit to short right. One of our worst things is our baserunning, and we have guys who get in rundowns, and get thrown out. They're not concentrating. So it might be partially because they're stoned."

Bloom mentioned that his pitcher, Kyle Kushman, who covers cultivation issues for the magazine, does tend to keep a joint burning throughout the game. "Being the pitcher, I have a single task," Kushman said. "And the pot allows me to have kinda almost like tunnel vision, and narrow my focus. But it's not good for making rapid multiple-choice decisions, like being a shortstop, where you have a million choices as the ball is coming to you. Is this guy running or is he not running? But for me, for pitching, which is basically a repetition thing, like hitting, it's very good. It's like bowling, kinda. You wanna bowl a three hundred? Well, when you're stoned you put 'em down every time." (Grant Roberts, it might be worth mentioning, has the second-best earned-run average on the Mets.)

"But it's not to be taken lightly," Kushman said, "because THC is a miraculous substance. It's just so hard to quantify and qualify." Once, toking up



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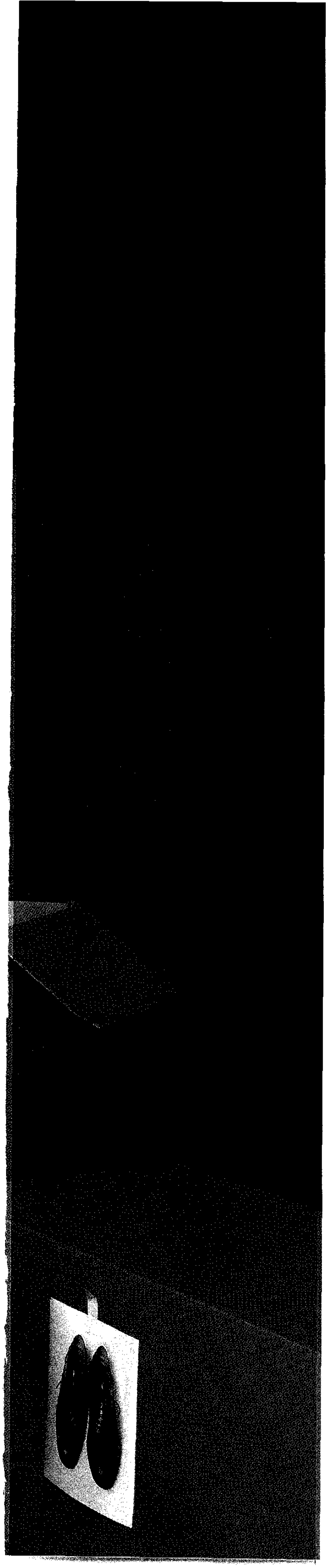

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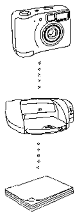

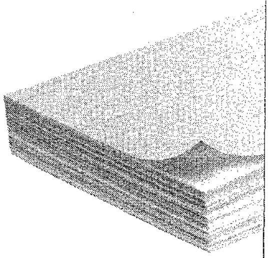

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in the office a few years ago, he blacked out and fell into the lap of a colleague. If he were a professional athlete, he says, he would save the smoke for after the game. "I think that I would have the self-control to give the respect that's due to the position that I've been given, should I get called up from the Bonghitters."

—*Matt Dellinger*

DEPT. OF APPARITIONS
BIG KAHUNA

A kahuna is a master of Hawaiian esoteric practices. Recently, Mariko Gordon and Hugh Cosman engaged a kahuna to bless their house on Manhattan Avenue, between 105th and 106th Streets, which they were moving into after spending two years restoring it.

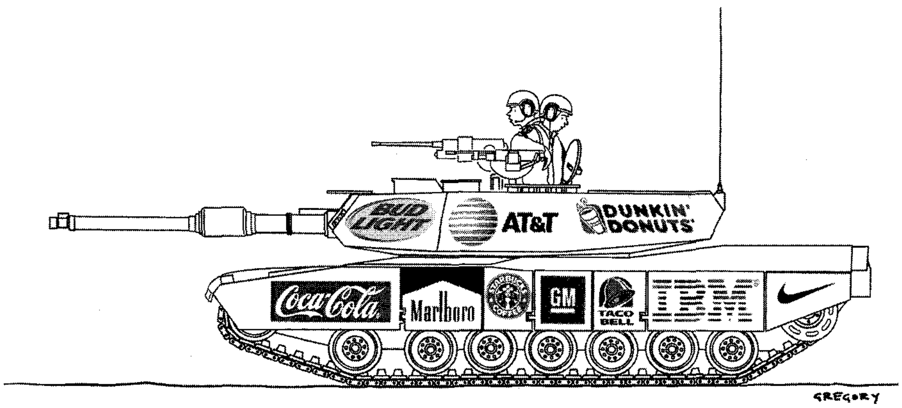
Gordon, a forty-year-old money manager, grew up in Hawaii. Not long ago, she began taking hula lessons. When she asked her teacher whether she knew of anyone who might bless the house, the teacher recommended Aupuni Iwi'ula, who lives in Seattle and comes to the city once a month to teach at the American Indian Community House, on lower Broadway. Iwi'ula is around fifty. He is tall and a bit heavy. He has long black hair, with a few strands of gray, which he draws back into a ponytail. His face is round, his nose is broad, and his complexion is the color of the Polynesians in Gauguin's paintings.

Iwi'ula visited the house for the first time a few months ago. While Cosman, who is fifty and has a metal workshop in Brooklyn, talked about plaster details and how he had repaired the dumbwaiter, Iwi'ula became aware of several immaterial presences. In an upstairs bedroom, he heard a machine making a noise like *tak*, *tak*, *tak*. In his mind's eye, he saw curtains of a heavy dark fabric drawn across the windows, and the windows themselves painted black. On the floor were sheets of paper on which were written "Manifesto . . ." When he told Cosman and Gordon what he had seen, they were surprised. They told him that the house had been occupied early in the last century by left-wing radicals, and that one room had held a printing press.

Downstairs in the kitchen, Iwi'ula saw, buried under the floor, a box containing a parchment document with writing on it that he couldn't make out; it didn't appear to be modern English. Although Cosman and Gordon's older son, Haden, who is nine, was very much in favor of excavating to search for the box, in case it also had money in it, Cosman said that tearing up the brand-new bamboo floors was out of the question. Observations such as the printing press and the metal box are what Iwi'ula calls "minor disturbances." "If there had been only minor disturbances," he said later, "I would have blessed the house then, and left." Elsewhere in the kitchen, though, he ran into a major disturbance. "In the corner by the door that leads outside, I saw a soldier," he said. "It really took me aback. He had a tricornered hat, and red and white in his coat, and epaulettes on his shoulders. He seemed to be carrying something in his left hand that had a shaft to it—I guess it was a kind of firearm. He was also holding his side, as if he were injured." When Iwi'ula described the soldier to Cosman and Gordon, he didn't say that the soldier seemed to be wounded; he didn't want to frighten Haden or his younger brother, Lucas, who is five. As it happened, Cosman and Gordon knew that the house is situated at what would have been one of the front lines of the Battle of Harlem Heights, which took place on September 16, 1776. The soldier made Iwi'ula think that the blessing was more complicated than an ordinary one, and that he should prepare himself.

When Iwi'ula came back to the house, on his next trip to the city, all his clothing was black. He says that black and white make a person invisible to what he calls "entities." He brought along a plastic cup with the logo of the Holiday Inn, where he was staying. He walked through the house to confirm that the soldier was still there. He was, along with several other soldiers, who kept mostly to the back yard. Into the plastic cup Iwi'ula put water from the kitchen tap and a little bit of salt. Then he walked through the house again. This time, his progress was stately, as if he were at the head of a procession. His lips moved, but nothing he said could be heard. He dipped his fingers in the water and flicked it here and there, as a means of cleansing the place. When he came to the door in the kitchen that leads to the back yard, he cajoled the soldiers into accompanying him. Fortunately, they were accustomed to following orders, so they all went with him. He left the house through a door in the basement—he says it's important to go out by a different door from the one he comes in—and then he got a taxi to go to the airport. To keep the entities from entering the driver and maybe harming him, Iwi'ula absorbed them into himself by inhaling them. An ideal place to release the entities is over water. The procedure also requires wind, to disperse the entities with sufficient force so that they can't find their way back to where they had been—nothing about the blessing procedure is favorable to the entities. Iwi'ula had the cab cross the Queensboro Bridge, and, when he was in the middle of the bridge, he rolled down the window and slowly let out his breath.

—*Alec Wilkinson*



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THE FINANCIAL PAGE
THE BRIBE EFFECT

Salomon Smith Barney, like so many firms on Wall Street, seeks to please its clients. On June 24, 1997, when it was still Salomon Brothers, it offered one of those clients, Bernie Ebbers, the C.E.O. of WorldCom, the opportunity to buy more than two hundred thousand shares in the initial public offering of a telecommunications company called Qwest. At the time, the I.P.O. market was lucrative, and a bet on Qwest was a virtual lock, so Ebbers bought in. Three days later, Qwest's stock price was up twenty-seven per cent, and Ebbers began selling. In the end, he cleared almost two million dollars. Clients appreciate this sort of thing, especially when it happens more than once. Between 1996 and 2001, Salomon helped Ebbers earn eleven million dollars flipping I.P.O. shares.

As it happened, while Salomon was making Ebbers richer, he was sending a lot of business its way. Between 1997 and 2001, according to Thomson Financial, WorldCom paid Salomon a hundred and forty million dollars in fees for its underwriting of the company's debt and equity, and another seventy-six million in fees for its advice on mergers and acquisitions.

Salomon insists that the transactions had nothing to do with each other—that there was quid and quo, but nary a pro in between. You'd have a hard time finding anyone who believes this. It sure looks as though Wall Street investment banks, in the hope of winning future business, routinely doled out cheap I.P.O. shares to corporate executives, who then sold them for quick, hefty profits—a process known as "spinning." That practice has occasioned a predictable chorus of outrage, from editorial writers and politicians alike. Representative Michael Oxley, the chairman of the House Financial Services Committee—which is currently investigating I.P.O. allocations at Salomon, Goldman Sachs, and Credit Suisse First Boston—calls these gifts to executives "another example of how insiders were able to game the system at the expense of the average investor." Massachusetts Secretary of State William Galvin put it more bluntly: "The problem with I.P.O. spinning is that it's bribery."

But what of it? The lavishing of gifts and favors on prospective or valued customers is generally considered smart salesmanship. Potential advertisers and clients get free Knicks tickets. Maître d's give regulars and bigwigs the best tables. Las Vegas casinos comp high rollers. Movie studios take journalists on junkets. For that matter, most civilians get the Ebbers treatment every day, barraged as they are with offers of free stuff in exchange for their patronage. Buy a Chevy Malibu and get three thousand dollars in cash up front. Join Columbia House and get twelve free CDs. In all these cases, companies are giving away "something that serves to induce or influence," which is Webster's definition of a bribe. So what makes Wall Street's particular brand of bribery such a big deal?

CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

It's a big deal because the deals are so big. When it comes to bribery, size does matter. A free Linkin Park CD is one thing; eleven million bucks is another. Even so, the real scandal on Wall Street isn't the deals themselves but the system that the investment banks rigged to pay for them. Here's how it worked. In the late nineties, most companies that went public sold their shares for much less than fair market value. In other words, when they could have sold ten million shares for thirty dollars apiece they sold them for twenty dollars apiece. As a result, they left a hundred million dollars on the table. And who advised them to do this? The very investment banks that were using those cheap shares as goodies for lucky gents like Bernie Ebbers. In effect, the hundred million dollars that should have gone to the company that was going public went instead into the pockets of privileged customers. Banks were making bribes with other people's money.

What was insidious about this was that it gave investment banks an incentive to keep underpricing I.P.O.s. According to a recent study by the finance professors Jay Ritter and Tim Loughran, in the nineteen-eighties I.P.O.s rose, on average, seven per cent on the first day of trading. Between 1990 and 1998, they rose fifteen per cent. And in the dot-com heyday, between 1998 and 2000, they rose sixty-five per cent. One of the main causes for this surge was Wall Street's desire to keep itself supplied with baksheesh to hand out to coveted clients.

This, in turn, deprived small companies of money that might have made the difference between life and bankruptcy. It corrupted the efficient allocation of capital, which is supposedly the whole reason that Wall Street exists. And it allowed the biggest investment banks to insulate themselves from competition, by creating a self-reinforcing pattern: the more business the banks did, the more bribes they could hand out, and the more business they got. "If you owned a big chunk of the I.P.O. market, you had more I.P.O. shares to hand out," Ritter said last week. "It was a rich-get-richer situation." All of this was far more destructive to the well-being of the capital markets than a little payola for a few telecom C.E.O.s.

The irony is that if Salomon had written Bernie Ebbers a check for two million dollars, instead of offering him shares of Qwest, it would have been clear that the firm was breaking the law. (At the moment, no firm or executive has been charged with anything related to I.P.O. spinning.) All things being equal, writing a check might have been less egregious. Bribery is no good, but if we're going to have it on Wall Street at least let it be in cash.

—*James Surowiecki*

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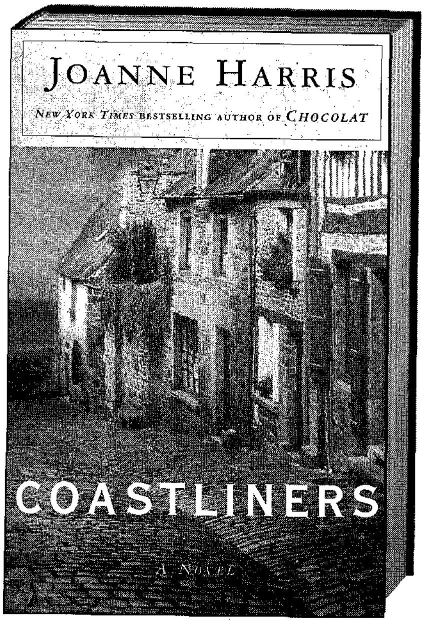

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LETTER FROM WASHINGTON

THE CHAIRMAN

He's the other Powell, and no one is sure what he's up to.

BY NICHOLAS LEMANN

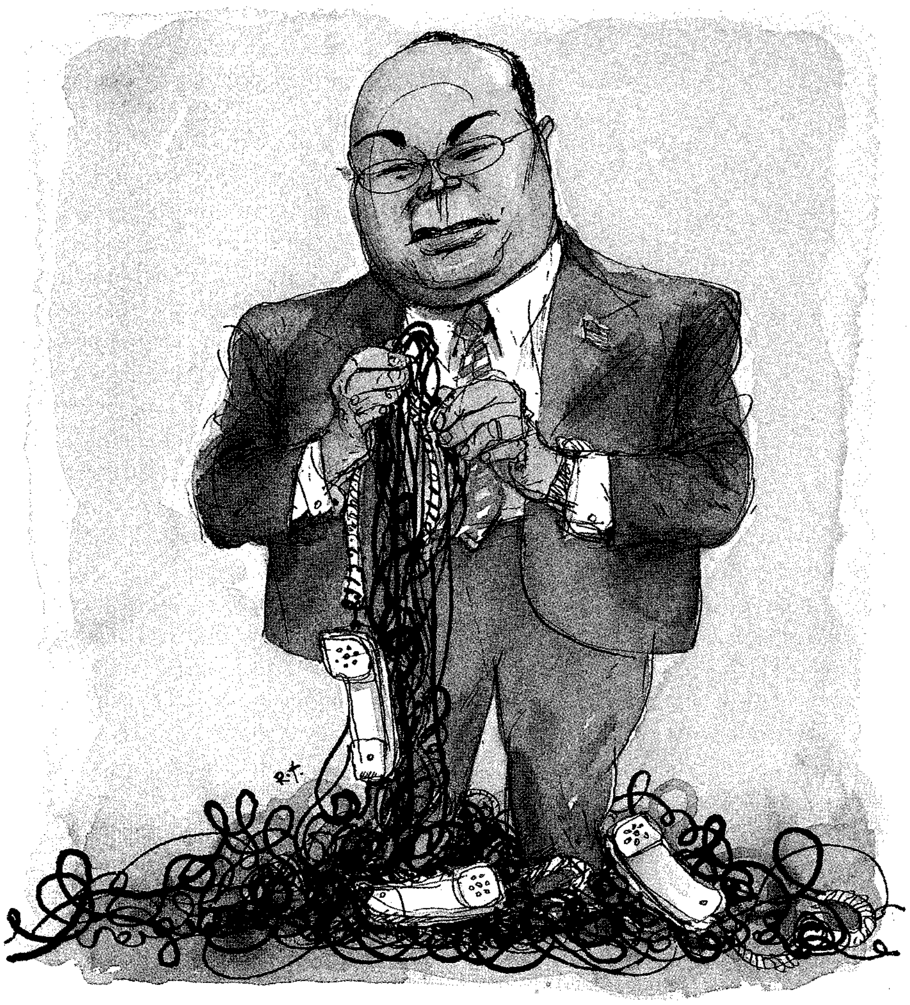
Last year, my middle son, in eighth grade and encountering his first fairly serious American-history course, indignantly reported that the whole subject was incomprehensible. I was shocked. What about Gettysburg and the Declaration of Independence and the Selma-to-Montgomery march? Just look at my textbook, he said, and when I did I saw his point. His class had got up to the eighteen-forties. What I expected was a big beefing up of the roles of Sacagawea and Crispus Attucks, and, indeed, there was some of that. But the main difference between my son's text and that of my own childhood was that somebody had made the disastrous decision to devote most of it to what had actually happened in American history. There were pages and pages on tariffs and bank charters and reciprocal trade agreements. I skipped ahead, past the Civil War, hoping for easier going, only to encounter currency floats and the regulation of freight rates. Only a few decades into the twentieth century did it become possible to see the federal government's main function as responding to dramatic crises and launching crusades for social justice, instead of attempting to referee competing claims from economic interests.

Even now, if one were to reveal what really goes on behind the pretty speeches and the sanctimonious hearings in Washington, what you'd find is thousands of lawyers and lobbyists madly vying for advantage, not so much over the public as over each other: agribusiness versus real estate, banks versus insurance companies, and so on. The arena in which this competition mainly takes place is regulatory agencies and commissions and the congressional committees that supervise them. It's an insider's game, less because the players are secretive than because the public and the press—encouraged by the players, who speak in jargon—can't get themselves interested.

One corner of Washington might be called F.C.C. World, for the Federal Communications Commission. F.C.C. World has perhaps five thousand denizens. They work at the commission itself, at the House and Senate commerce committees, and at the Washington offices of the companies that the commission regulates. They read *Communications Daily* (subscription price: $3,695 a year), and every year around Christmastime they grumblingly attend the Chairman's Dinner, at a Washington hotel, where the high point of the evening is a scripted, supposedly self-deprecating comedy routine by the commission's chairman.

Of all the federal agencies and commissions, the F.C.C. is the one that Americans ought to be most interested in; after all, it is involved with a business sector that accounts for about fifteen per cent of the American economy, as well as important aspects of daily life—telephone and television and radio and newspapers and the Internet. And right now F.C.C. World is in, if not a crisis, at least a very soapy lather, because a good portion of what the angry public thinks of as the "corporate scandals" concerns the economic collapse of companies regulated by the F.C.C. Qwest, WorldCom, Adelphia, and Global Crossing, among others, are (or were) part of F.C.C. World. AOL Time Warner is part of F.C.C. World. Jack Grubman, the former Salomon Smith Barney analyst who seems to have succeeded Kenneth Lay, of Enron, as the embodiment of the corporate scandals, is part of F.C.C. World. In the past two years, companies belonging to F.C.C. World have lost trillions of dollars in stock-market valuation, and have collectively served as a dead weight pulling down the entire stock market.

This year, an alarmed and acerbic anonymous memorandum about the state of the F.C.C. has been circulating widely within F.C.C. World. It evokes F.C.C. World's feverish mood ("The F.C.C. is fiddling while Rome burns") and suggests why nobody besides residents of F.C.C. World has thought of the commission in connection with the corporate scandals. The sentence I just quoted is followed by this explanation: "The ILECs appear likely to enter all l.d. markets within twelve months, while losing virtually no residential customers to attackers since 1996, and suffering about 10% market share loss in business lines to CLECs." It's a lot easier to think about evil C.E.O.s than to decipher that.



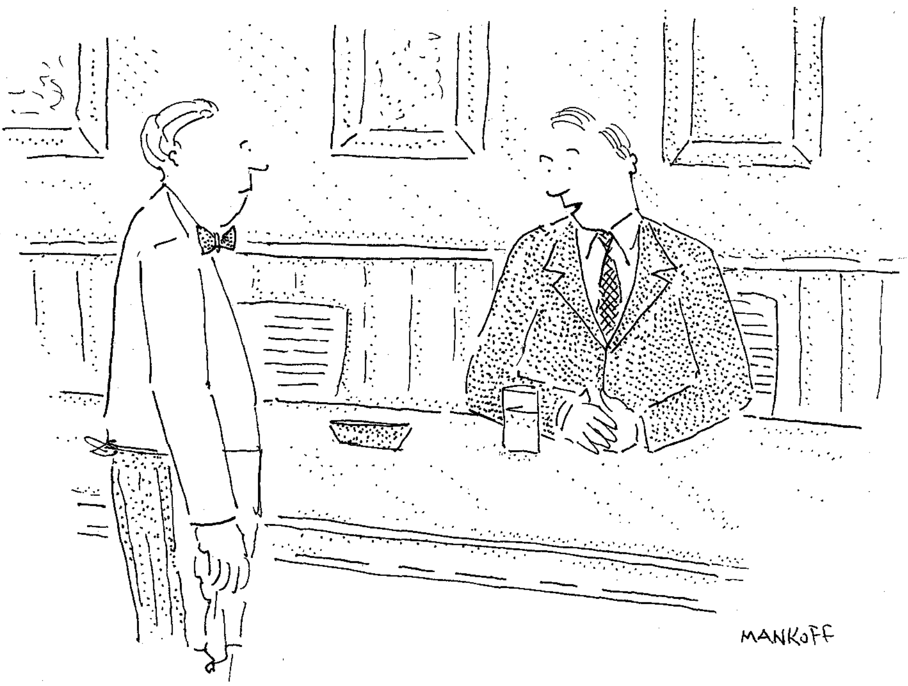
Everybody likes Michael Powell, but at the F.C.C. he has had a maddening effect.

RICHARD THOMPSON

Even in good times, F.C.C. World pays obsessive attention to the commission's chairman. In bad times, the attention becomes especially intense; and when the chairman is a celebrity F.C.C. World devotes itself to full-time chairman-watching. The current chairman, Michael Powell, is a celebrity, at least by government-official standards, because he is the only son of Colin Powell, the Secretary of State. Unlike his father, he has a kind of mesmerizing ambiguity, which generates enormous, and at times apoplectically toned, speculation about who he really is and what he's really up to. Powell is young to be the head of a federal agency—he is thirty-nine—and genially charming. Everybody likes him. Before becoming chairman, he was for three years one of the F.C.C.'s five commissioners; not only is he fluent in the F.C.C.'s incomprehensible patois, he has a Clintonesque love of the arcane details of communications policy. He's always saying that he's an "avid moderate." And yet he has a rage-inciting quality. One of his predecessors as chairman, Reed Hundt, quoted in *Forbes,* compared Powell to Herbert Hoover. Mark Cooper, of the Consumer Federation of America, calls him "radical and extreme." Just as often as he's accused of being a right-wing ideologue, Powell gets accused of being paralytically cautious. "It ain't about singing 'Kum-Ba-Yah' around the campfire," another former chairman, William Kennard, says. "You have to have an answer." One day last spring, Powell, testifying before a Senate subcommittee, delivered an anodyne opening statement, and the subcommittee's chairman, Ernest Hollings, of South Carolina, berated him. "You don't care about these regulations," Hollings said. "You don't care about the law or what Congress sets down. . . . That's the fundamental. That's the misgiving I have of your administration over there. It just is amazing to me. You just pell-mell down the road and seem to not care at all. I think you'd be a wonderful executive vice-president of a chamber of commerce, but not a chairman of a regulatory commission at the government level. Are you happy in your job?"

"Extremely," Powell said, with an amiable smile.

One cannot understand Powell's maddening effect, at least on Democrats and liberal activists, without understanding not just the stated purpose of the commission he chairs but also its real purpose. The F.C.C. was created by Congress in 1934, but it existed in prototype well before the New Deal, because it performs a function that is one of the classic easy cases for government intervention in the private economy: making sure that broadcasters stick to their assigned spots on the airwaves. Its other original function was preventing American Telephone & Telegraph, the national monopoly phone company, from treating its customers unfairly. Over the decades, as F.C.C. World grew up into a comfortable, well-established place, the F.C.C. segued into the role of industrial supervision—its real purpose. It was supposed to manage the competition among communications companies so that it didn't become too bloody, by artfully deciding who would be allowed to enter what line of business. In addition to looking out for the public's interest, the commission more specifically protected the interests of members of Congress, many of whom regard the media companies in their districts as the single most terrifying category of inter-



"I've done a lot of soul searching, and I've come to the conclusion that I should be thinking less about money and more about naked women."

• •

est group—you can cross the local bank president and live to tell the tale, but not the local broadcaster. According to an oft-told F.C.C. World anecdote, President Clinton once blocked an attempt to allow television stations to buy daily newspapers in the same city because, he said, if the so-and-so who owned the anti-Clinton Little Rock *Democrat-Gazette* had owned the leading TV station in Little Rock, too, Clinton would never have become President.

F.C.C. World may have been contentious, but it was settled, too, because all the reasonably powerful players had created secure economic niches for themselves. Then, in the nineteen-eighties, the successful breakup of A.T. & T.—by far the biggest and most important company the commission regulated—deposited a thick additional sediment of self-confidence onto the consciousness of F.C.C. World. A generation ago, for most Americans, there was one local phone company, one long-distance company, and one company that manufactured telephones, which customers were not permitted to own—and they were all the same company. It was illegal to plug any device into a phone line. By the mid-nineteen-nineties, there were a dozen economically viable local phone companies, a handful of national long-distance companies competing to offer customers the lowest price and best service, and stores everywhere selling telephone equipment from many manufacturers—and millions of Americans had a fax machine and a modem operating over the telephone lines. A.T. & T. had argued for years that it was a "natural monopoly," requiring protection from economic competition and total control over its lines. So much for that argument. Over the same period, the F.C.C. had assisted in the birth of cable television and cell phones and the Internet. It was the dream of federal-agency success come true: consumers vastly better served, and the industry much bigger and more prosperous, too.

The next big step was supposed to be the Telecommunications Act of 1996, one of those massive, endlessly lobbied-over pieces of legislation which most people outside F.C.C. World probably felt it was safe to ignore. Although the Telecom Act sailed under the rhetorical banner of modernization and deregulation, its essence was a grand interest-group bargain, in which the local phone companies, known to headline writers as "baby Bells" and to F.C.C. World as "arbocks" (the pronounced version of RBOCs, or regional Bell operating companies), would be permitted to offer long-distance service in exchange for letting the long-distance companies and smaller new phone companies use their lines to compete for customers. Consumers would win, because for the first time they would get the benefits of competition in local service while getting even more competition than they already had in long distance. But the politics and economics of the Telecom Act (which was shepherded through Congress by Vice-President Gore) were just as important. Democrats saw the act as helping to reposition them as the technology party—the party that brought the Internet into every home, created hundreds of thousands of jobs in new companies, and, not least, set off an investment boom whose beneficiaries might become the party's new contributor base. Clinton's slogans about the "information superhighway" and "building a bridge to the twenty-first century," which, like all Clinton slogans, artfully sent different messages to different constituencies, were the rhetorical correlates of the Telecom Act, and Gore's cruise to the Presidency was supposed to be powered substantially by the act's success.

The F.C.C. had a crucial role in all this. The arbocks are rich, aggressive, politically powerful, and generally Republican (though like all important interest groups they work with both parties); they immediately filed lawsuits, which wound up tying the hands of their new competitors in the local phone market for more than three years. Through rule-making, enforcement, and litigation, the F.C.C., then headed by Reed Hundt, who was Gore's classmate at St. Albans, was supposed to keep the arbocks in their cages, so that not only long-distance companies like A.T. & T. and MCI WorldCom but also a whole category of new companies, "see-lecks" (the pronounced version of CLECs, or competitive local exchange carriers), could emerge. This entailed the regulatory equivalent of hand-to-hand combat: the see-leck is supposed to have access to the arbock's switching equipment, the arbock won't give the see-leck a key to the room where it's kept, so the see-leck asks the F.C.C. to rule that the arbock has to give it the key.

Partly because Hundt assured the see-lecks and other new companies that he would protect them, and partly because of the generally booming condition of the economy then, investment capital flooded into the see-lecks—companies with names like Winstar, Covad, and Teligent—and into other telecommunications companies. Even not obviously related technology companies like Cisco Systems benefitted from the telecom boom: demand for their products was supposed to come from the see-lecks and other new players. There would be no conflict between the interests of the new telecom companies and those of consumers; as one of Hundt's former lieutenants told me, "Reed used to joke that my job was to make sure that all prices went down and all stocks went up."

The years following the passage of the Telecom Act were the peak of the boom. Wall Street had its blood up, and that meant not just more startups but also more mergers of existing communications companies: Time Warner and AOL decided to throw in together, and A.T. & T. and Comcast, and so on. (Surely, WorldCom and the other telecom bad guys believed that their self-dealing, stock-overselling, and creative accounting would go unnoticed because the market was so undiscriminating.)

By the time the outcome of the 2000 Presidential election had been determined, the telecom crash was well under way. Nonetheless, the chairmanship of the F.C.C. remained one of the best jobs, in terms of influence and visibility, available to a career government regulator. Three Republicans emerged as candidates: Powell, who was a commissioner; Harold Furchtgott-Roth, the farthest-to-the-right commissioner; and Patrick Wood, the head of the Texas Public Utility Commission and, as such, a George W. Bush guy. In Texas, however, Wood had crossed the most powerful person in the arbock camp, Edward Whitacre, the C.E.O. of S.B.C. Communications, which is headquartered in San Antonio. This meant that the arbocks didn't want Wood as head of the F.C.C., because he might be too pro-see-leck. (Wood is now the head of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.) Michael Powell had to signal the arbocks that he

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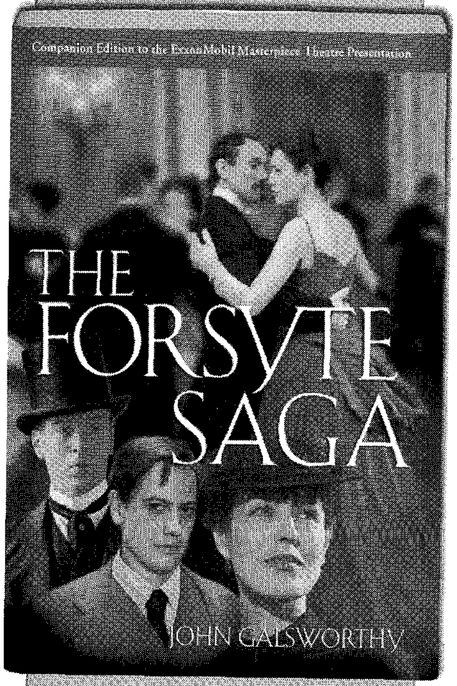
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wasn't as threatening as Wood, while also signalling the conservative movement that he was only negligibly farther to the left than Furchtgott-Roth.

Powell did this deftly. For example, in December of 2000 he appeared before a conservative group called the Progress & Freedom Foundation and gave a very Michael Powell speech—whimsical, intellectual, and free-associative (Biblical history, Joseph Schumpeter, Moore's Law)—that began by making fun of the idea that the F.C.C. should try to keep new telecom companies alive. "In the wake of the 1996 Act, the F.C.C. is often cast as the Grinch who stole Christmas," Powell said. "Like the Whos, down in Whoville, who feast on Who-pudding and rare Who-roast beast, the communications industry was preparing to feast on the deregulatory fruits it believed would inevitably sprout from the Act's fertile soil. But this feast the F.C.C. Grinch did not like in the least, so it is thought." Thus Powell was indicating that if he became chairman he didn't expect to administer first aid to the see-lecks as part of the job. He was appointed to the chairmanship on the first day of the Bush Administration.

Twenty months into the Administration, nearly all the see-lecks are dead or dying; nearly all long-distance companies, not just WorldCom, are in serious trouble; cable companies have lost half their value; satellite companies are staggering. The crash has had an automatically concentrating effect, because as new companies die the existing companies' market share increases, and, if the existing companies are in good shape financially, they have the opportunity to pick up damaged companies at bargain prices. During the Bush Administration, as the financial carnage in communications has worsened, the communications industry has moved in the direction of more concentration. If the Bells wind up protecting their regional monopolies in local phone service, and if they also merge, the country will be on its way to having a national duopoly in local service: Verizon, in the East, and S.B.C., in the West. And these companies could dominate long distance as well, because of the poor health of the long-distance companies.

The cable business also seems close to having two dominant national companies, AOL Time Warner and Comcast. Unlike the phone companies, they don't have to share their wiring with other companies and so can more fully control what material they allow to enter people's homes. As part of the complicated bargaining with interest groups that led to the 1996 Telecom Act, the limits on concentration in the radio industry were significantly loosened, and in the past six years the number of radio-station owners in the United States has been cut by twenty-five per cent; today, a large portion of local and national radio news programming is supplied by a single company, Westwood One, a subsidiary of Viacom.

In this situation, many Democrats and liberals think, the F.C.C. should be hyperactive—the superhero of government regulation, springing to the rescue of both consumers and the communications industry. It should try to breathe life into the see-lecks and other new companies. It should disallow mergers, maintain ownership limits, and otherwise restrain the forces of concentration. It should use the government's money and muscle to get new technology—especially fast Internet connections—into the homes of people who can't afford it at current market prices. (An analogy that a lot of people in F.C.C. World make is between telecom and the Middle East: the Clinton people blame the bloodshed on the Bush people, because they disengaged when they came into office, and the Bush people blame it on the Clinton people, because they raised too many expectations and stirred too many passions.)

But Michael Powell's F.C.C. has not been hyperactive. Powell has been conducting internal policy reviews and reforming the management of the F.C.C. and waiting for the federal courts and the Congress to send him signals. (In mid-September, Powell finally initiated a formal review of the F.C.C.'s limits on media concentration.) This doesn't mean he has been inactive; rather, he has been active in a way that further infuriates his critics—in a manner that smoothly blends the genial and the provocative, he muses about whether the fundamental premises of F.C.C. World really make sense, while giving the impression that he's having the time of his life as chairman. At his first press conference, when he was asked what he was going to do about the "digital divide"—that is, economic inequality in access to the Internet—he said, "You know, I think there is a Mercedes divide. I'd like to have one and I can't afford one." At the National Cable & Telecommunications Association convention, in Chicago, Powell, following a troupe of tumblers to the stage, interrupted his walk to the podium to perform a somersault.

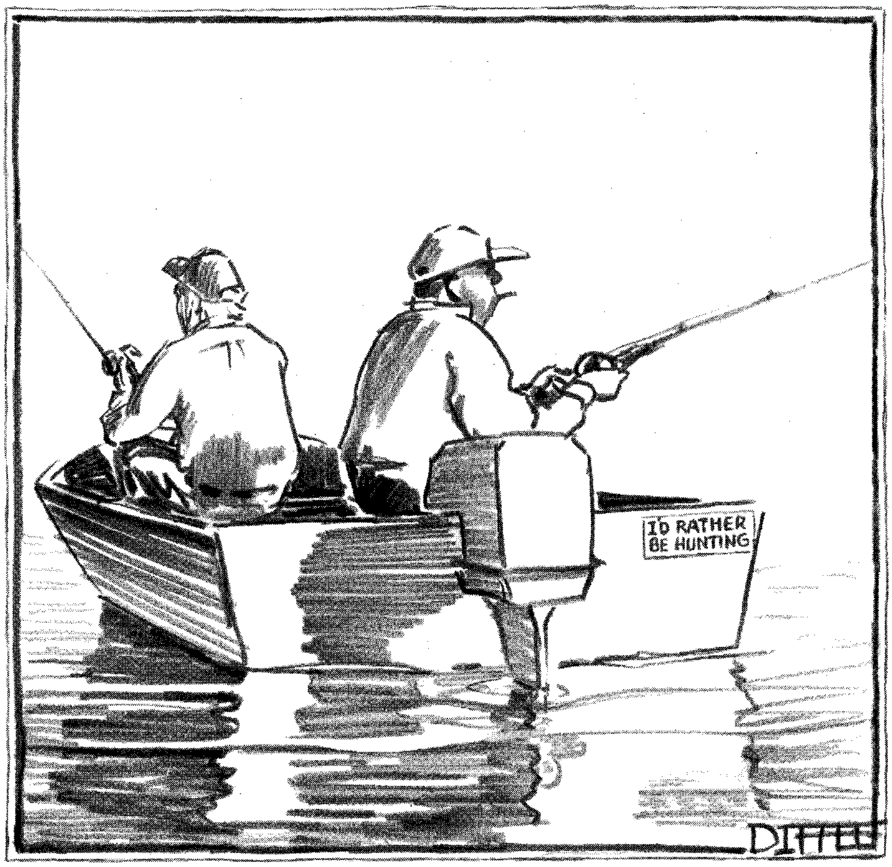
Not long ago, I went to see Powell in his office at the F.C.C. Until 1998, when the commission moved to a new building in Southwest Washington, near the city's open-air fish market, F.C.C. World was at the western edge of downtown, where everybody would encounter everybody else at a few familiar restaurants and bars. Today, the F.C.C. building looks like the office of a mortgage company in a suburban office park. Even the chairman's suite, though large, is beige, carpeted, and fluorescent. Powell is a bulky man who wears gold-rimmed glasses and walks with a pronounced limp, the result of injuries he suffered in a jeep accident in Germany, in 1987, when he was an Army officer. Because of the accident, he left the Army and went to law school, where he became entranced with conservative ideas about regulation, particularly the idea that the government, rather than trying to correct the flaws of the market before the fact—"prophylactically," as he likes to say—should wait till the flaws manifest themselves and then use antitrust litigation to fix them. He worked briefly at a corporate law firm, and then became a protégé of Joel Klein, the head of the antitrust division of the Clinton Justice Department and the man who led the government's legal case against Microsoft. (He was recently appointed chancellor of the New York public-school system.) It testifies to Powell's political skill that he is probably the only high official in the Bush Administration who not only served in the Clinton Administration but also maintains close ties to Bush's nemesis Senator John McCain, of Arizona. One of the things about Powell that annoy people is his enduring love of law school—"It's sort of like a law-school study session over there," one Democratic former commissioner said. As if to confirm the charge, Powell, when I arrived, introduced me to four law students, summer interns at the commission, whom he'd invited to sit in.

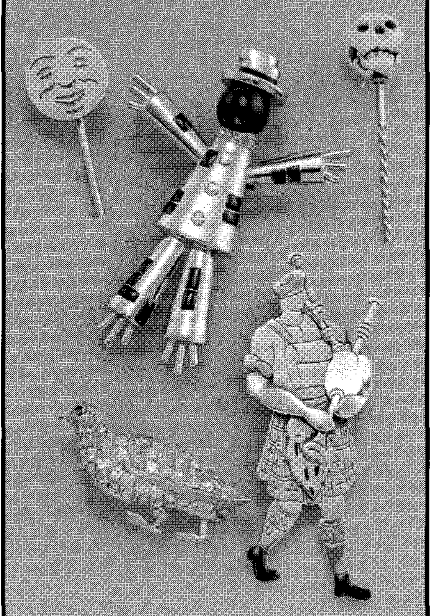
I began by asking Powell whether he agreed with the founding assumptions of the F.C.C. For example, could private companies have apportioned the airwaves among themselves without the government being involved?

"I think we'll never know," Powell said. "I don't think it's an automatically bad idea, the way some people will argue. Land is probably the best analogue. We don't seize all the land in the United States and say, 'The government will issue licenses to use land.' If my neighbor puts a fence one foot onto my property line, there's a whole body of law about what I can do about that, including whether I can tear it down. If a wireless company was interfering with another wireless company, it's a similar proposition. There are scholars who argue—indeed, the famous Ronald Coase treatise that won the Nobel Prize was about this—that spectrum policy is lunacy. The market could work this out, in the kinds of ways that we're accustomed to."

Talking to Powell was fun. Unlike most high government officials, he doesn't seem to be invested in appearing dignified or commanding. He slumps in his chair and fiddles with his tie and riffs. He speaks in ironic air quotes. He's like your libertarian friend in college who enjoyed staying up all night asking impertinent rhetorical questions about aspects of life that everybody else takes for granted but that he sees as sentimental or illogical. After a while, I asked him whether he thought his predecessors' excitement about the 1996 Telecommunications Act had been excessive.

"I would start with a caveat," Powell said. "Look, I can't fault those judgments in and of themselves, given the time and what people thought. They were not the only ones who were hysterical about the opportunities. But, frankly, I've always been a little bit critical. First of all, anybody who works with the act knows that it doesn't come anywhere close to matching the hyperbole that was associated with it, by the President on down, about the kinds of things it's going to open up. I mean, I don't know what provisions are the information-superhighway provisions, or what provisions are so digitally oriented, or some of the things that were a big part of the theatre of its introduction. When one starts reading the details, one searches, often in vain, for





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these provisions. But, nonetheless, there was a rising dot-com excitement, and an Internet excitement, and people thought this was historic legislation, and it certainly was.

"But. We were sucking helium out of balloons, with the kinds of expectations that were being bandied around, and this is before the economy or the market even gets in trouble. It was a dramatically exaggerated expectation—by the leadership of the commission, by politicians, by the market itself, by companies themselves. It was a gold rush, and led to some very detrimental business decisions, ones that government encouraged by its policies, frankly. Everybody wanted to see numbers go up on the board."

Powell began imitating an imagined true believer in the Telecom Act. " 'I want to see ten competitors. Twenty competitors! I want to see thirty-per-cent market share. Fifty-per-cent market share! I want the Bells to bleed! Then we'll know we've succeeded.' " Now Powell returned to being Powell. "I think that expectation was astonishingly unrealistic, in the short term. They wanted to see it while they're there. We were starting to get drunk on the juice we were drinking. And the market was getting drunk on the juice we were drinking. There's no question, we went too soon too fast. Too many companies took on too much debt too fast before the market really had a product, or a business model."

How could the Telecom Act have been handled better? "We could have chosen policies that were less hell-bent on a single objective, and were slightly more balanced and put more economic discipline in the system," Powell said. "Money chased what seemed like government-promised opportunity. The problem with that is there's a morning after, and we're in it. And the problem is there is no short fix for this problem. This debt is going to take years to bring down to a realistic level. In some ways, for short-term gain, we paid a price in long-term stability."

Powell went on to say that it might have turned out differently if there had been a more "reasonable" level of investment. "No, we wouldn't have every home in America with competitive choice yet—but we don't anyway. I don't think it's the remonopolization of telephone service. I don't buy that. The Bells will prosper, but did anybody believe they wouldn't? The part of the story that didn't materialize was that people thought so would MCI WorldCom and Sprint."

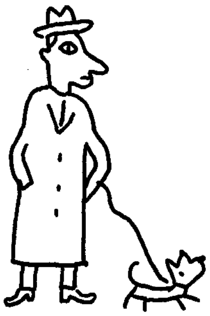
Other local phone companies, he added, hadn't materialized as viable businesses, either, and they never might. "Everybody's always saying, 'The regulators did this and this and this.' But, candidly, the story's quite the opposite. I think the regulators bent over backward for six years to give them a chance. Conditions don't get that good except once every thirty years, and it didn't happen. So, whatever the reason, we're looking at a WorldCom that's teetering. We're looking at a long-distance business that has had a rapid decline in its revenue base. A.T. & T. is breaking itself up. Sprint has struggled."

Could the F.C.C. have done anything to make the long-distance companies stronger? "At the F.C.C.? I think I'll just be blunt. My political answer? Yes, there's all kinds of things we can do at the margin to try to help. But I can't find thirty billion dollars for WorldCom somewhere. I can't mitigate the impacts of an accounting scandal and an S.E.C. investigation. Were I king, it would be wonderful, but I don't have those kinds of levers. I don't know whether anybody does. At some point, companies are expected to run themselves in a way that keeps them from dying." Powell couldn't have made it much clearer that he doesn't think it's his responsibility to do anything about the telecom crash. He has demonstrated his sure political touch by making accommodationist gestures—in August, for example, five months after disbanding the F.C.C.'s Accounting Safeguards Division, Powell announced that he was appointing a committee to study accounting standards in the communications industry. But that shows that Powell is better at riding out the storm than, say, Harvey Pitt, his counterpart at the Securities and Exchange Commission, and does not mean that he plans to try to shore up the telecom industry.

I asked Powell if it would bother him if, for most people, only one company provided cable television and only one provided local phone service. "Yes," he said. "It concerns us that there's one of each of those things, but let's not diminish the importance of there being one of each of those things. That still is a nice suite of communications capabilities, even if they aren't direct analogues of each other." Anyway, Powell said, before long the phone companies will be able to provide video service over their lines, and the cable companies will provide data service over their lines, so there will be more choice. "So, yeah, we have this anxiety: we have one of everything. The question is, Does it stay that way?"

The concentration of ownership and the concentrated control of information did not appear to trouble Powell, either. He said that people confuse bigness, which brings many benefits, with concentration, which distorts markets. "If this were just economics, it's easy. If you were to say to me, 'Mike, just worry about economic concentration,' we know how to do that—the econometrics of antitrust. I can tell you when a market's too concentrated and prices are going to rise. The problem is other dimensions, like political, ideological, sometimes emotional. Take the question of, if everybody's controlling what you see, the assumption there is that somehow there'll be this viewpoint, a monolithic viewpoint, pushed on you by your media and you won't get diversity. I think that's a possibility. I don't think it's nearly the possibility that's ascribed to it sometimes."

Powell explained, "Sometimes when we see very pointed political or parochial programming, it gets attacked as unfair. I see some of the same people who claim they want diversity go crazy when Rush Limbaugh exists. They love diversity, but somehow we should run Howard Stern off the planet. If it has a point of view, then it becomes accused of bias, and then we have policies like"—here his tone went from ironic to sarcastic—"the fairness doctrine, which seems to me like the antithesis of what I thought those people cared about. So when somebody is pointed and opinionated, we do all this stuff in the name of journalistic fairness and integrity or whatever, to make them balance it out."

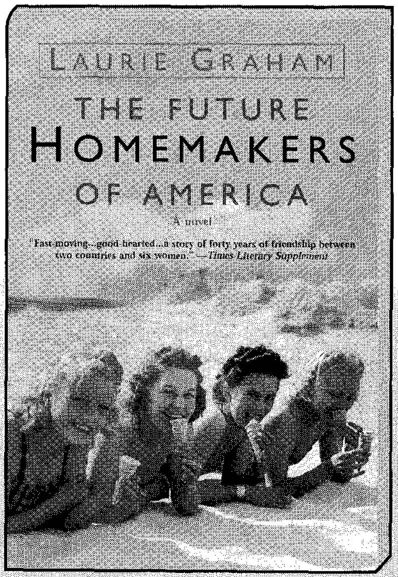


F.C.C. World abounds in theories about Michael Powell. One is that he can't make up his mind about how to address the crisis in the industries he regulates—so he talks (and talks and talks) flamboyantly about the market, in order to buy himself time. Another is that he's carrying water for the arbocks and the big cable companies. Another is that he is planning to run for the Senate from Virginia (or to be appointed Attorney General in a second Bush term), and doesn't want to do anything at the F.C.C. that would diminish his chances. Another is that he's waiting to move until there is more consensus on some course of action, so that he doesn't wind up going first and getting caught in the crossfire between the arbocks and the cable companies and the television networks. (In F.C.C. World, this is known as the Powell Doctrine of Telecom, after Colin Powell's idea that the United States should never commit itself militarily without a clear objective, overwhelming force, and an exit strategy.) And another is that he actually believes what he says, and thinks the telecommunications crash is natural, healthy, and irreversible, and more concentration would be just fine.

"This is why elections matter," Reed Hundt, who isn't happy about what has become of his Telecom Act, told me. It's true that the F.C.C.—much more than, say, the war in Afghanistan—is a case in which a Gore Administration would be acting quite differently from the Bush Administration. Consumers might have noticed the difference by now, but there's no question whether communications companies have noticed. The arbocks are doing better against their internal rivals than they would have done if Gore had won. Next election, they'll help the party that helped them. If the Republicans win, policy will tilt further in the arbocks' favor. If they lose, perhaps the arbocks' rivals—the long-distance companies and the telecommunications upstarts—with their friends now in power, will stage a comeback. America's present is not unrecognizably different from America's past. ♦

In their world,
a woman's place was
in the home...

and a friend's
place was always
in the heart.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NEW YORK JOURNAL

THE IN-LAW

Willie Nelson has a song for everyone.

BY ADAM GOPNIK

Nine-forty-five on a Thursday morning, and the songwriter and singer Willie Nelson is on a bus parked on the north side of West Fifty-third Street, steaming soy milk for a friend's decaffeinated cappuccino. He is on the bus—which is called Honeysuckle Rose 3, to distinguish it from two nearly identical predecessors, and which bears an airbrushed scene of cactus and desert on its side—partly because he needs to be on the bus (the north side of West Fifty-third Street backs onto the stage entrance of the Ed Sullivan Theatre, where later that day he is to record two appearances on the David Letterman show), but mostly because on the bus is where he wants to be, whether he really needs to be there or not. "I've slept more nights on the bus than anywhere else in my life," he says. He is there with four or five members of his family—the long-tenured group of musicians and drivers and assistants (they are never called roadies or guys or an entourage) who have travelled with him up and down the country for the past half century. ("I've been here for twenty-one years," one of them explains, "and I'm a rookie.")

It takes only a few minutes for an outsider to grasp that waiting on the bus is not just what they do; waiting on the bus is who they are. Though Willie is officially staying at the Carlyle Hotel, which he has favored for thirty years, he seemed uneasy there—earlier that day, leaving the hotel, he had sought out and gravely shaken hands with the room-service waiters, the doormen, the bellboy, and two elevator men before he felt he could decently depart—and was eager to get a limo back to the bus. That the bus has this kind of hold on Willie and his *family* has led people who are not often on the bus to believe that this is because of what goes on on the bus, but once you are on the bus you come to understand that the hold of the bus lies in what does not go on there. "It's like a submarine," Willie says. People wait on it. A television, which has nineteen-sixties-style reception, reds bleeding into greens, is almost always on. A rerun of the situation comedy "Spin City" is playing at this moment, and two or three people are watching.

Nelson says, "If I can get the rhythm and imagine the feeling, then I can sing it. It's all one song." Photograph by Danny Clinch.

"I love Michael J. Fox," one says. "I was upset when he left the show because of that sad illness of his." (Willie's family really talks that way. Willie, on being asked about Kris Kristofferson's remark that he is the greatest songwriter since Stephen Foster, says to a radio interviewer, “I think Kris was offering something a shade too strong with that proposition you quoted.”) “So when they changed casts I thought, No way! But this Charlie Sheen is doin’ a fine job, idn’t he?” he concludes. Although good-natured argument about women and politics is valued on the bus, what is most valued is the kind of aphorism that might have been produced had Dr. Johnson been a regular at the Ryman Auditorium: “Well, they say he’s got perfect pitch.” “Yeah, well, you know what they say about perfect pitch. It’s when you throw a banjo into a trash can and hit an accordion.”

In the midst of this serene morning, Willie, wearing black jeans, steams milk. His hair is left long, and falls to the middle of his back. He has a tiny, surprisingly fragile build. He looks not so much feminine as Indian: a quick and nimble scout. He is sixty-nine. The soy milk he steams—and he steams a lot of soy milk these days, times being what they are—is steamed for its own sake, to do the job right. Watching Willie Nelson steam milk tells you almost everything you need to know about his character. He is not the “outlaw” beloved of men’s-magazine journalism but, instead, sophisticated, patient, and almost absurdly well mannered—when anyone gets on the bus, even the lowliest record-label flack, he not only greets the person cordially but introduces him to every other person on the bus, so that there is a constant round of awkward handshaking in the narrow aisle, like a French wedding party entering a café.

Willie’s love of steaming soy milk—and when he is not steaming soy milk himself he is ordering soy mochas in from Starbucks—is not meant to show that he is in any way a “reformed” or altered tippler. “I don’t get drunk as much anymore because I don’t have as much to get drunk about,” he admits. He explains, “My wife actually got worried about my drinking so much regular milk, you know, so she got me into rice milk and now soy milk, which I greatly enjoy. A soy mocha’s a fine thing.” Still, his standard greeting to someone thinking of coming to the bus is “Don’t forget your papers.” (He has even endorsed his own line of bourbon, called, of course, Old Whiskey River.) It is closer to the truth to say that he regards all the lesser drugs as among the shapers of life: you are what you tipple. You construct yourself with small doses, and you have a responsibility to think through just what equation you want in your body at any one time. “We used to have two drummers and two bass players, and it sounded great if everyone was on the same drug,” he reminisces at one moment, and you realize that he’s not joking; it is a sincere bit of music criticism.

After he finishes making the cappuccino, he listens to a cassette of the Buffalo Springfield protest song “For What It’s Worth.” The saxophone player Bill Evans had asked him to record it, and he listens, “trying to find a feeling.” He says, “I can sing anything if I can find the rhythm and the feeling, and if I can’t, I can’t. If I can get the rhythm and imagine the feeling, then I can sing it. It’s all one song.” He frowns and starts to fiddle with a satellite radio that was recently installed on the bus. The TV is still on. “It’s amazing, this satellite radio,” he says. “Have you been following it? There are several hundred stations and no commercials and there is really good music.” He spends hours a day listening to the radio, as he has done since he was a boy, in Abbott, Texas. Today, he oscillates, with almost diagrammatic neatness, between two stations: Frank’s Place and Hank’s Place. Frank’s Place is a satellite station devoted to the music of Frank Sinatra and his contemporaries; Hank’s Place is devoted to the music of Hank Williams (the first Hank Williams) and his contemporaries. Willie’s morning, like a lot of his music, will be made up of an assemblage of the two seemingly opposed styles. Willie listens to both with the birdlike attentiveness he gives to all music: his lips apart, his head just cocked, nodding efficiently if he hears something he particularly likes. (When he is talking to friends, he ducks his head; when he is listening to music, he lifts it.) He stops to do a phone interview, and patiently restates episodes from his legend: “Yes, I can tell that story. Well, what happened was that I came home drunk one night, and after

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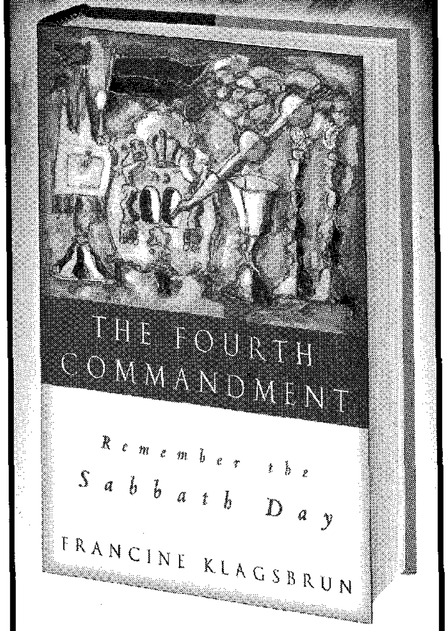

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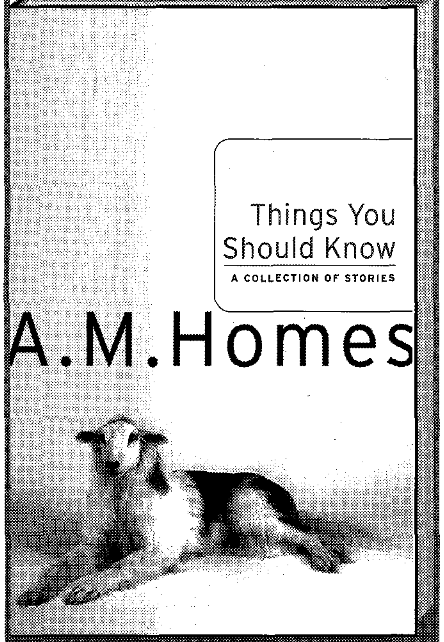

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AIR SHAFT

One might find
a little window
even if there were
no sky

There might be air
though dank
sunk
at the base
of an air shaft
booming with cries

One might clear
the surface of grit
so that a small page
could lie there with a pen
and the weevil
with graphite wings

—*Mary Kinzie*

I passed out she sewed me up in the sheets and packed up all my clothes. No—I think I didn't make it clear. I didn't say she sold them. She *sewed* me up in them and then, yes, that's right, and then she packed up all my clothes. I said, 'and packed up all my clothes.' Yes, it really happened. No, that was not the wife I am married to today."

Someone gets on the bus to say that the band is ready now—apparently, you do not get Willie off the bus without a very good reason—and Willie prepares to go into the theatre to rehearse. He puts on a cowboy hat, which makes him look even smaller than he is. He gets off the bus, blinking in the light, as though he hadn't been outdoors in years. A crowd of fans is waiting, and Willie stops to sign for every autograph seeker. Then he goes inside. Lyle Lovett, who has been invited to play with Willie, is standing by the microphone with his own guitar. The song they will be performing is a request of Letterman's, the Townes Van Zandt ballad "Pancho and Lefty," a beautiful, enigmatic song about two friends. Willie stands to one side of the microphone, singing out of the corner of his mouth. The arrangement is complicated, and the song gets five run-throughs. When it is done, someone goes up to Willie Nelson and, jokingly, calls him the Abe Lincoln of American music.

Willie looks pleased. "Well, you know what they say about Lincoln," he says. "Woke up one morning and said, 'I freed the *what*?' "

Perhaps one of the oddest things in American music is the difference between Willie Nelson's reputation and his music. It is not only that, in spite of his reputation as a plainspoken, free-wheeling outlaw, he is almost awesomely courtly, polite, and guarded. Nor is it that there is more latte than marijuana in his life now. It is that the myth locked in place the image of St. Willie, the man who reconciled rednecks and hippies, the American icon of rail-splitter integrity—while, every year, his music has become more hybrid, complicated, and urbane.

His career falls into four distinct episodes. In the first, from 1950 to 1970, he was, improbably, a d.j. in the Northwest, and then a hardscrabbling Nashville songwriter, a tunesmith writing hits for Patsy Cline and Faron Young. He wanted to sing but wasn't allowed to. ("That's talking," one producer remarked.) In fact, his singing style was picked up from Sinatra, "who taught me phrasing. I learned always to undersing—never to try and oversell an emotion. You have to hold something back." In the second phase, which began in 1972, when he moved to Austin and, three years later, released the "outlaw" album "Red Headed Stranger," he became the myth: making the opposed forces of "Easy Rider" sit down and smoke grass together, giving them a music to share. His yearly Fourth of July picnic in Austin turned into a kind of Southern Woodstock, and he soon became to the Carter Administration what Robert Frost had been to Kennedy's. It's the songs that he wrote and performed during this period—"On the Road Again," "Mamas, Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up to Be Cowboys"—that are his least interesting, or anyway least typical. They have a self-conscious, nobody-here-but-us-cowboys folksiness that occasionally touches on corn, and they are professionally happy. In the third period, which began with the release of the album "Stardust," in 1978, he became the prime interpreter of the American standards, picking his way through Hoagy Carmichael and Gershwin classics, scrubbing away the Las Vegas patina they had acquired since Sinatra's classic recordings of the fifties, and making them again the limber, plaintive art songs they had always wanted to be.

Now he's in a fourth period, where he is recording and, more important, performing in a range of styles so varied that, for anyone else, they would seem deliberately perverse. He sings everything from top-forty Latin music and Gypsy jazz to "For What It's Worth." He is no longer the outlaw of American music. He is its in-law, peering jovially over everyone's shoulder at the wedding and saying, "Welcome. I can sing you, too." Nonetheless, he preserves his place as a radical, and outsider. Like all great intuitive American performers (Ronald Reagan and Bruce Springsteen, for instance), he gestures toward the edge while occupying the center, thereby pleasing the fringe and reassuring the middle. (Less shrewd performers, like Bill Clinton and Garth Brooks, gesture toward the middle and then occupy it, earning the numbed assent of the center and the rage of the edges.) Willie's voice pulls the edge and the center taut.

A few days later, Honeysuckle Rose 3 is parked outside Irving Plaza, at Fifteenth Street, where Willie is giving a series of concerts. (He'll be back in New York to play another few in early November.) Before the show, Willie is wound tighter than one might expect, given how many years he has been on the road, and the bus is less genial than it is during the daytime—a dressing room rather than an ashram. Inside the theatre, the crowd is on their feet, as usual. Although New York audiences have a reputation for "sophistication," for liking a broad number of things, this is true only in aggre-

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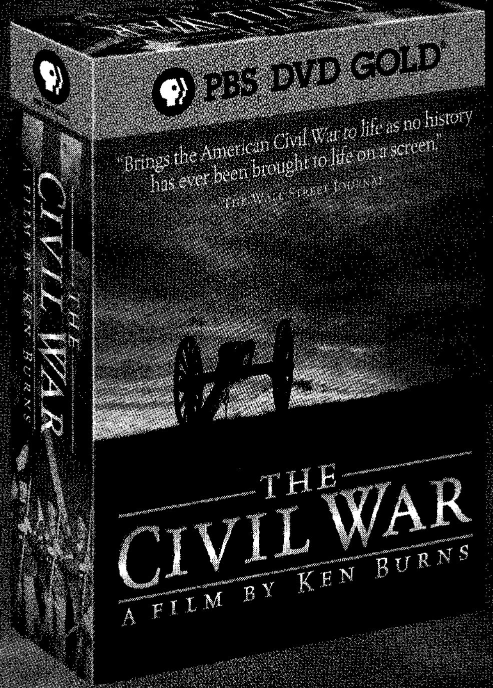
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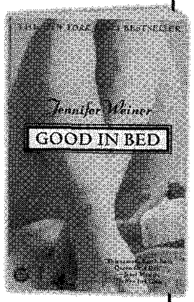

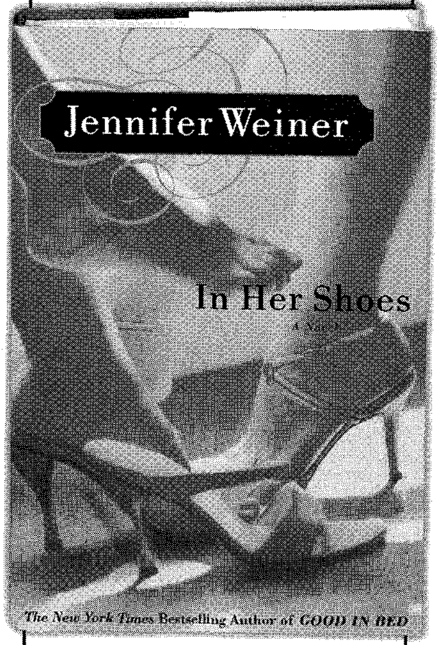

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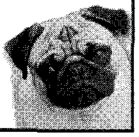


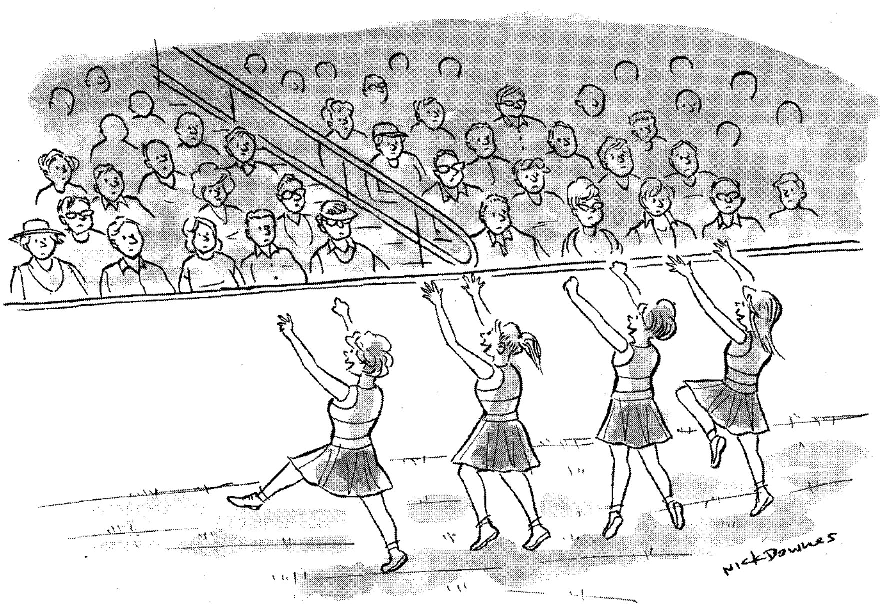
gate. New York is so dense, and so varied, and so packed with subcultures, that any event will magically draw the crowd that is most characteristic of it. Hold a koto concert on the Upper West Side and you will not get an audience of broad-minded international-music enthusiasts; you will get kimonos. The same is true tonight. The crowd at Irving Plaza would be mocked as too characteristic at a bar in Fort Worth: almost everyone wears gingham and boots, and holds a beer. These are New York fans of roadhouse music, country rock, outlaw country, and they have come to hear its master.

Fortunately, Willie's band begins in expected style, launching into a high-intensity "Whiskey River" just at ten o'clock. It is an anthem of the crazy Willie, and the crowd reacts. In concert, the band has a tight, driven, balls-of-our-feet swing, where on record it can sound merely bouncy and good-humored. Willie dominates not with his voice, which is aging now, and tends to the clipped and perfunctory, but with his guitar. His guitar playing, which one rarely hears at length on his records, is modelled on that of the great French Gypsy Django Reinhardt, whom Willie first heard on the radio as a boy, and whose thirties and forties recordings with the Quintet of the Hot Club of France he calls "the best music I've ever heard." He copies Django's machine-gun attack, chromatic chords, and metal vibrato, and adds the square dancing and lilt of country music. There is Django's distinctive *bwong*, and his hurdy-gurdy chords—but each note of a solo is hit directly on the nose and marks out the tune in uncluttered calm. The effect is of French-Gypsy smoke rings turned into barbed wire. (Tonight, Willie devotes an entire interlude to Django, in which he solos for several minutes on "Nuages," a masterpiece of jazz nonchalance.) The band plays a group of Hank Williams tunes (not a medley, a real series) and then a series of Willie's early classics. (Maybe what all Willie's styles have in common is their human quaver: Hank Williams's style as a singer, like Django's on guitar, is built around a distinct, portable, moaning vibrato, and this is what Willie preserves in his singing—suggesting an almost mystical common heartbreak beneath the many kinds of songs.)

Then Willie stops, and steps to the microphone. "Right now I'd like to bring on an old friend of ours from New York City," he says, and the crowd buzzes. Who is it? Dylan is a real possibility, or why not Lou Reed, outlaw to outlaw, or, maybe . . .

Onstage, Willie bows. "Ladies and gentlemen," he says, "Miss Marian McPartland." The crowd is stunned, silent, as an elegant elderly woman in a sequinned gown comes out, and slips in at the piano bench—the grande dame of jazz piano. She and Willie duet on three liquid numbers: "Sweet Georgia Brown," a slow version of "The Gypsy," and "The Heart of a Clown." Her lilting, dreamy piano complements Willie's voice as he carefully negotiates the complicated chord structures of the jazz songs, like a man climbing down from a high roof on a homemade ladder. The crowd listens, a little baffled—the band listens, a little baffled—and then she leaves in a shimmer of sequins and high, lacquered hair. It is hard to tell, with Willie, what is provocation, what homage, and what innocence. It is possible that he is trying to please New Yorkers with what he imagines is their music; it is also possible that he is trying to provoke New Yorkers by reminding them what is their music. After that—two extremes of American popular music sharing a stage in bliss, or at least in harmony—the band turns back on. For two more hours, it shows the full range of Willie's current style. There are the pop songs, the country ballads, the Broadway standards, and even the top-forty songs. The guitar and the voice make it all hang together in a single sound.

A listener might recall how Peter Guralnick, in the second volume of his biography of Elvis, concluded, almost sheepishly, that the real Elvis had no interest at all in the category changes and wars of true and debased style that preoccupy his admirers (including Guralnick himself earlier on); he just wanted to sing as many kinds of songs as he could. The distinctions, fetishized by pop-culture critics, between the authentic and the commercial were, for Elvis, as inaudible as dog whistles. It was all one song for him,



"Hang your fading hopes and dreams on your children's high-school teams!"

• •

too. The genius of American popular music is inclusive, even when its ideology is exclusive. The great figures of American pop embrace where their admirers wish them to damn, and in this gap lie many misunderstandings. Elvis never got it through anyone's head, nor did Louis—or Dylan, who tried to make this point when, thirty years ago, he recorded the despised "Self-Portrait," with "Blue Moon" and "Belle Isle" on the same record, and got kicked in the rear for his efforts and went back to mumbling prophecies. Willie Nelson, however improbably, has managed to pull it off—perhaps because, uniquely, the circumstances of his career have meant that no one has ever demanded that he represent the unclouded condition of youth. He emerged as a middle-aged star, and his many-sidedness seemed earned. What sounds like compromise from our heroes sounds like wisdom from our fathers.

The concert drives on. Willie steps forward and begins to sing. The crowd sticks with him. He ends with a mean repeat of "Whiskey River" and disappears, and the crowd calls noisily for an encore.

Willie comes back onstage, steps forward, and begins to strum in waltz time. "Why are there so many songs about rainbows," he begins, his voice keening above the smoke and the smell of beer. "And what's on the other side?" Now the crowd is silent but restive. What the hell is *this*? Why, it's "Rainbow Connection," Kermit the Frog's plaintive anthem from "The Muppet Movie." (Willie has recorded it on an album for kids.) Hoagy Carmichael is one thing, that jazz whatever is one thing, even cocktail piano—but Muppet songs at one-thirty in the morning? Yet Willie keeps on singing—capturing his audience as he does, exposing the quiet tune and touching lyric—and by the end the crowd is singing along.

On his way back to the bus after the show, Willie stops to sign autographs, patiently and exhaustively, as always. Someone mentions how amazing it is that, so late in his career, he is able still to find so many old songs to sing and new influences to take in.

It is very late, and he has been looking like a man with a lot of miles on him, but he brightens suddenly. "Well, you know what they say," he says. "The early bird may get the worm. But the second mouse gets the cheese." ♦

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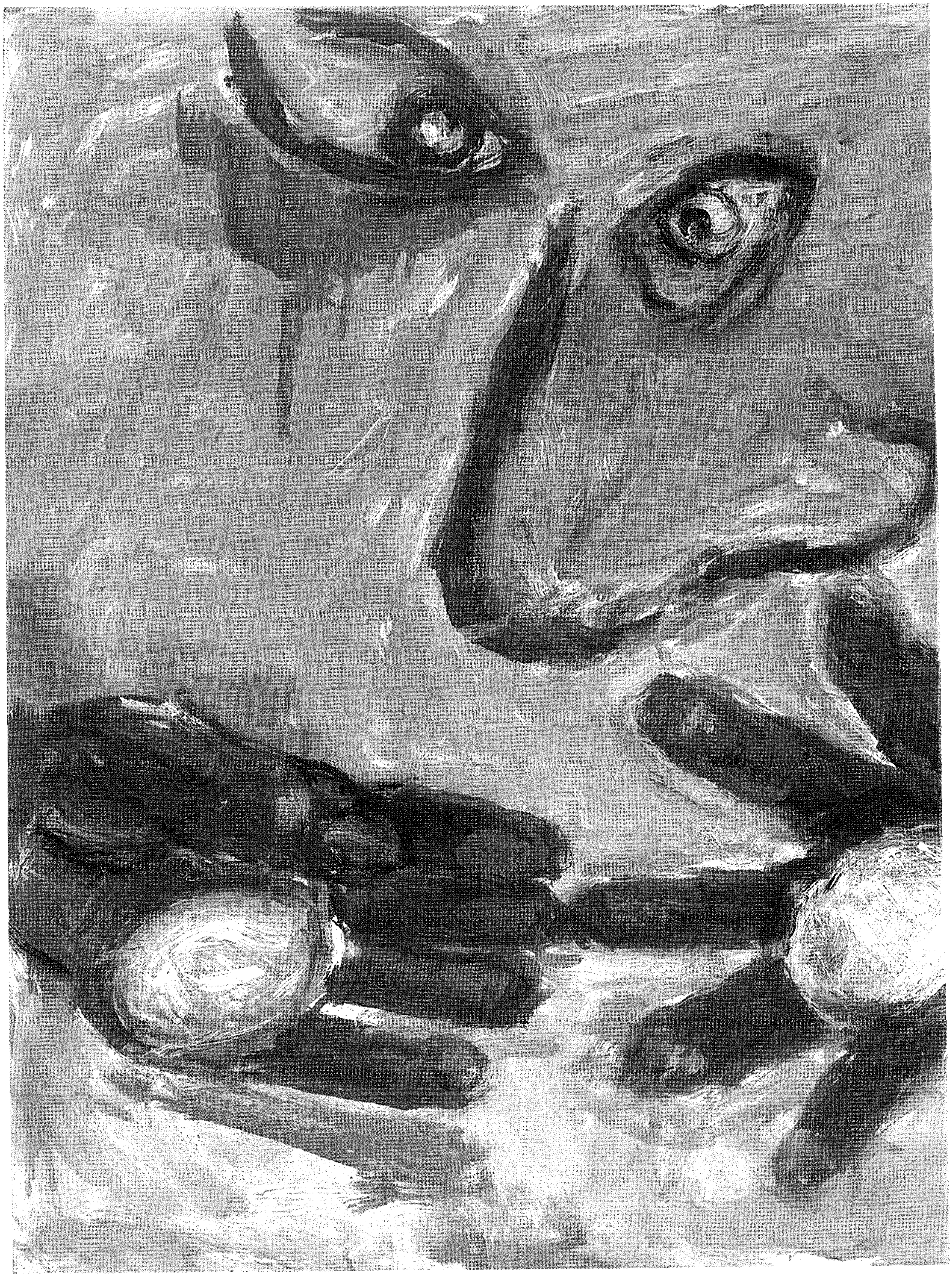


A NEUROLOGIST'S NOTEBOOK

THE CASE OF ANNA H.

Why was she losing her ability to recognize familiar objects by sight?

BY OLIVER SACKS

In January of 1999, I received the following letter, from a woman I will call Anna H.:

> Dear Dr. Sacks,
>
> My (very unusual) problem, in one sentence, and in non-medical terms, is:
>
> I can't read. I can't read music, or anything else.
>
> In the ophthalmologist's office, I can read the individual letters on the eye chart down to the last line. But I cannot read words, and music gives me the same problem. I have struggled with this for years, have been to the best doctors, and no one has been able to help.
>
> I would be ever so happy and grateful if you could find the time to see me.
>
> Sincerely yours,
> Anna H.

I phoned Mrs. H.—this seemed to be the thing to do, although I normally would have written back—because although she apparently had no difficulty writing a letter, she had said that she could not read at all. I spoke to her and arranged to see her at the neurology clinic at New York University, where I work.

Mrs. H. came to the clinic soon afterward—a charming, vivacious sixty-seven-year-old woman, with a strong Prague accent—and was able to relate her story in much more detail. She was a pianist, she told me, and the first intimation of anything the matter had come during a concert in 1991. She was performing Mozart piano concertos, and there was a last-minute change in the program, from the nineteenth piano concerto to the twenty-first. But when she flipped open the score of the twenty-first she found it, to her bewilderment, completely unintelligible. Although she saw the staves, the lines, the individual notes, sharp and clear, none of it seemed to hang together, to make sense. But, whatever her eye problem—she assumed the difficulty must have something to do with her eyes—she went on to perform the concerto flawlessly, from memory, and the strange incident was dismissed as "one of those things."

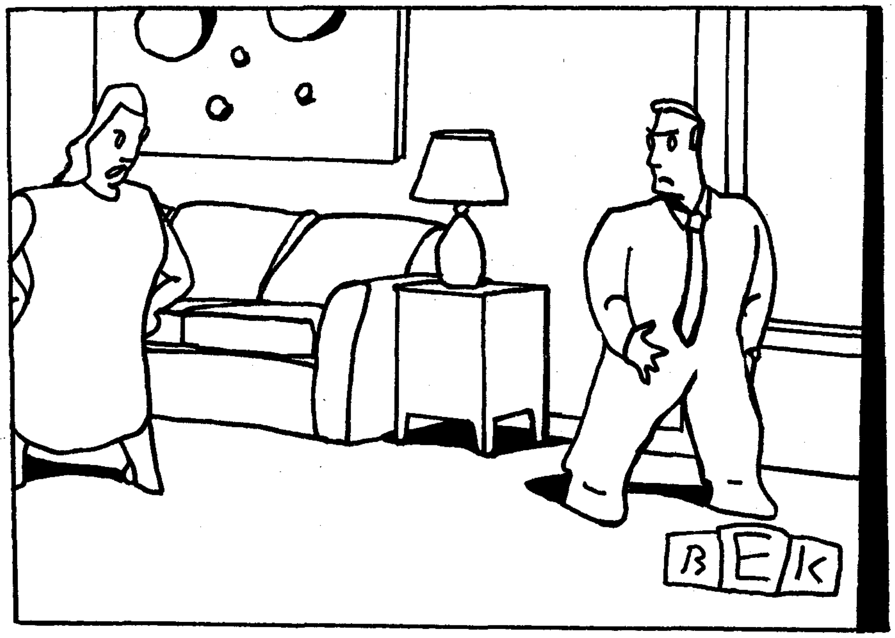
Several months later, the problem recurred, and Mrs. H. found that her ability to read musical scores fluctuated. If she was tired, or had a fever (she had had a bad bout of the flu just before the concert), she could hardly read them at all, but when she was fresh her sight-reading was as swift and easy as ever. But, in general, the problem worsened, and though she continued to teach, to give concerts around the world, and to record, she increasingly depended on her musical memory, her extensive repertoire, since it was now becoming impossible to learn new music by sight. "I used to be a fantastic sight reader," she said, "easily able to play a Mozart concerto by sight, and now I couldn't."

Occasionally, at concerts, there were lapses of memory, though Mrs. H., a brilliant improviser, could usually cover these. When she was at ease, with friends or students, her playing seemed as good as ever. And thus, through inertia, or fear, or a sort of adjustment, it was possible for her to overlook her peculiar problems in reading music, for she had no other visual problems, and her memory and ingenuity still allowed her a full musical life.

In 1994, three years or so after she had first noticed problems reading music, Mrs. H. started to have problems with reading words. Here again, there were good days and bad, and even times when her ability to read seemed to change from moment to moment: a sentence would look strange, "like cuneiform or

PAINTING BY SUSAN ROTHENBERG

Anna did particularly badly in tests of visual perception. She called a violin a banjo, a glove a statue, and pliers a banana.



"Wait a second—you and I still have a lot of finished business."

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hieroglyphics" at first; then suddenly it would look fine, and she would have no difficulty reading it. (Similar "alexias," sometimes lasting only a few seconds, can occur in the course of a migraine—I have sometimes had these myself.) Her ability to write, however, was quite unaffected, and she continued to maintain a large correspondence with former students and colleagues scattered throughout the world, though she depended increasingly on her husband to read letters she received, and even to reread her own.

An ability to write despite an alexia is not that uncommon. I recently received a letter from Howard Engel, a Canadian novelist, who told me that he had a somewhat similar problem following a stroke. "The area affected," he relates, "was my ability to read. I can write, but I can't read what I've just written. . . . So, I can write, but I can't rewrite. . . . My vision for the most part is unaffected until I look at a text. Then, whatever I'm looking at turns into unfamiliar blocks of type that could at first glance be taken for Serbo-Croatian. Familiar words, including my own name, are unfamiliar blocks of type and have to be sounded out slowly. Each time a name recurs in an article or review, it hits me as unfamiliar on its last appearance as it does on the first. . . . I have just started [writing] a crime novel in which the hero has similar problems." Though Engel was a fair sight reader, he told me later, he had no musical alexia.

Anna H., however, was beginning to develop additional visual problems. She noticed that she tended to "miss" objects to the right, and decided, after some minor mishaps, that she had best give up driving.

She had sometimes wondered whether her strange problem with reading might be neurological rather than ophthalmological in origin. "How can I recognize individual letters, even the tiny ones on the bottom line of the eye doctor's chart, and yet be unable to read?" she had wondered. Then, in 1996, she started to make occasional embarrassing mistakes, such as failing to recognize old friends, and she found herself thinking of a case history of mine that she had read years before, entitled "The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat." She had chuckled when she read this, in 1986, but now she started to wonder whether her own difficulties might be eerily similar in nature.

Finally, five years or more after her original symptoms, she was referred to a department of neurology for a full workup. Given a battery of neuropsychological tests—tests of visual perception, of memory, of verbal fluency, etc.—Mrs. H. did particularly badly in the recognition of drawings: she called a violin a banjo, a glove a statue, a razor a pen, and pliers a banana. Asked to write a sentence, she wrote, "This is ridiculous." There was a fluctuating inattention to the right, and very poor facial recognition (measured by recognition of photographs of famous public figures). She could read, but only slowly, letter by letter. She would read a "C," an "A," a "T," and then, laboriously, "cat," without recognizing the word as a whole. Yet, if she was shown words too quickly to decipher in this way, she could nonetheless correctly sort them into salient categories, such as "living" or "non-living," even though she had no conscious idea of their meaning.

In contrast to her severe visual problems, her speech comprehension, repetition, and verbal fluency were all normal. An MRI of the brain was also normal, but when a PET scan was performed—this can detect slight changes in the metabolism of different brain areas, even when they appear anatomically normal—Mrs. H. was found to have diminished metabolic activity in the posterior part of the brain, the visual cortex. This was more marked on the left side, which would account perhaps for her occasional failure to see things in her right visual field. The neurologists who had tested her felt that she must have a degenerative condition, a so-called "posterior cortical atrophy," which would slowly continue to worsen.

The underlying disease was not treatable in any radical sense (at most, she might be given an anti-inflammatory drug like ibuprofen, which is thought to have some neuroprotective action in such conditions), but her neurologists felt that she might benefit from certain strategies: "guessing" words, for example, even when she could not read them in the ordinary way (for it was clear that she still possessed some mechanism that allowed unconscious, or preconscious, recognition of words). And, they felt, she might also use a deliberate and, so to speak, hyperconscious inspection of objects and faces, making particular note of their distinctive features, so that these could be identified in future encounters, even if the normal "automatic" recognition was impaired.

In the thirty months or so that had elapsed between this neurological exam and her first visit to me, Mrs. H. told me, she had continued to perform, though not as well, and not as frequently.

She found her repertoire diminishing, because she could no longer check even familiar scores by vision. "My memory was no longer fed," she remarked. Fed visually, she meant, for she felt that her auditory memory, her auditory orientation, had increased, so that she could now, to a much larger degree than before, learn and reproduce a piece by ear, sometimes after only a single hearing. She could not only reproduce a piece in this way; she could rearrange it in her mind. Nonetheless, there was, on balance, a shrinkage of her repertoire, and of her public concert performances. She continued to play in more informal settings, and to teach master classes at the music school.

Handing me the neurological report from 1996, she commented, "The doctors all say, 'Posterior cortical atrophy of the left hemisphere, very atypical,' and then they smile apologetically—but there's nothing they can do."

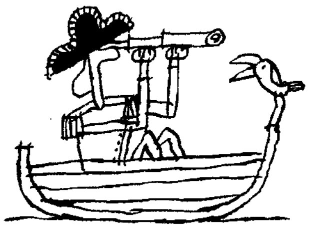
When I examined Mrs. H., I found that she had no problem matching colors or shapes, or recognizing movement or depth. But she showed gross problems in other areas. She was unable now to recognize individual letters or numerals (even though she still had no difficulty writing complete sentences). When I presented her with pictures to identify, it was difficult for her even to recognize pictures *as* pictures—she would sometimes look at a column of print or a white margin, thinking it was the picture I was quizzing her about. Of one such picture, she said, "I see a V, very elegant—two little dots here, then an oval, with little white dots in between. I don't know what it's supposed to be." When I told her it was a helicopter, she laughed, embarrassed. (The V was a sling; the helicopter was unloading food supplies for refugees. The two little dots were wheels, the oval the helicopter's body.) Thus she was now seeing only individual features of an object or picture, failing to synthesize them, to see them as a whole, much less to interpret them correctly. Shown a photograph of a face, she could perceive that the person was wearing glasses, nothing else. When I asked if she could see clearly, she said, "It's not a blur, it's a mush"—a mush consisting of clear, fine, sharp but unintelligible shapes and details.

Looking at the drawings in a standard neurological test booklet, she said of a pencil, "Could be so many things. Could be a violin . . . a pen." A house, however, she immediately recognized. Regarding a whistle, she said, "I have no idea." Shown a drawing of scissors, she looked steadfastly at the wrong place, at the white paper below the drawing.

When I asked Mrs. H. how she felt about herself and her situation, she said, "I think I am dealing with it very well . . . most of the time . . . knowing it is not getting better, but only slowly worse. . . . I've stopped seeing neurologists. I always hear the same thing. . . . But I am a very resilient person. I don't tell my friends. I don't want to burden them, and my little story is not very promising. A dead end. . . . I have a good sense of humor. And that's it, in a nutshell. It is depressing, when I think of it, frustrations daily. But I have many good days and years ahead."

After Mrs. H. had left, I was unable to find my medical bag—a black bag with some similarities (I now remembered) to one of the several bags she had brought. In the taxi she realized that she had taken my bag when she saw a red-tipped object sticking out of it (my long, red-tipped reflex hammer). It had attracted her attention, by its color and shape, when she saw it on my desk, and now she realized her mistake. Returning, breathless, to the clinic, she said, "I am the woman who mistook the doctor's bag for her handbag."

Mrs. H. had done so badly on the formal tests of visual recognition that I had difficulty imagining how she managed in daily life. How did she recognize a taxi, for example? How could she recognize her own home? How could she shop, as she told me she did, or recognize foods and serve them on a table? All this and much more—an active social life, travelling, going to concerts, and, above all, giving concerts—she did by herself when her husband, who was also a musician, went to Europe for weeks at a time. I could get no idea of how she accomplished this from seeing her dismal performance in the unnatural, artificial, impoverished atmosphere of a medical clinic. I had to see her in familiar surroundings, in her own context.



The following month, I visited Anna H. at home, home being a pleasant apartment in upper Manhattan, where she and her husband had lived for more than forty years. Josef was a charming, genial man, about the same age as his wife. They had met as music students nearly fifty years earlier, and had pursued their musical careers independently, but in parallel. The apartment had a friendly, cultured atmosphere, with a grand piano, a great many books, photographs of friends and family, abstract, modernist paintings on the wall, and mementos of their trips on every available surface. It was crowded—rich in personal history and significance, I imagined, but a nightmare, a complete chaos, for someone with visual agnosia. This, at least, was my first thought as I entered, negotiating my way between tables full of knickknacks. But Anna had no difficulty with the clutter, and threaded her way confidently through the obstacles.

Since she had had such difficulty on the drawing-recognition test, I brought a number of solid objects with me, wondering if she would do better with these. I started with some fruit and vegetables I had just bought, and here Anna did surprisingly well. She instantly recognized "a beautiful red pepper," recognized it from across the room; a banana, too; she was momentarily uncertain whether the third object was an apple or a tomato, though she soon decided, correctly, on the former. When I showed her a small plastic model of a wolf (I keep a variety of such objects, for perceptual testing, in my medical bag), she exclaimed, "A marvellous animal! A baby elephant, perhaps?" When I asked her to look more closely, she decided it was "a kind of dog."

Mrs. H.'s relative success in naming solid objects, as opposed to drawings of them, made me wonder whether she had a specific agnosia for representations. The recognition of representations requires a learning, the grasping of a code or convention, beyond that required for the recognition of objects. Thus primitive people who have never been exposed to photographs or drawings may fail to recognize that these are representations of something else; they may see paintings as mere colored surfaces. A complex system for recognition of representations must be specially constructed by the brain, and this ability may be lost through damage to that system by a stroke or disease, just as the learned understanding of writing, say, or any other acquired ability may be lost. Was Mrs. H.'s difficulty in recognizing drawings due simply to their "sketchiness," their two-dimensionality, their poverty of information, or had she developed a specific agnosia for such visual representations?

I followed Anna into the kitchen, where she set about taking the kettle off the stove and pouring boiling water into the teapot. She seemed to navigate her crowded kitchen well, knowing, for instance, that all the skillets and pots were hung on hooks on one wall, various supplies kept in their regular places. When I pointed to a large cylindrical carton of table salt, she said, "I know what it is. If I didn't know, I'd think it might be a carton for something—not a book." When we opened the refrigerator and I quizzed her on the contents, she said, "O.J., milk, butter, on the top shelf—and a nice sausage, if you're interested, one of those Austrian things . . . cheeses." She recognized the eggs in the fridge door, and, when I asked her, counted them correctly, moving her finger from egg to egg as she counted. I could see at a glance that there were eight—two rows of four—but Anna, I suspect, could not perceive the eightness, the gestalt, at a glance, and had to enumerate the eggs one by one. And the spices, she said, were "a disaster." They all came in identical red-topped bottles, and, of course, she could not read the labels. So—"I smell them! . . . And I call for help some of the time." With the microwave oven, which she used often, she said, "I don't see the numbers. I do it by feel—cook, try, see if it needs a bit more."

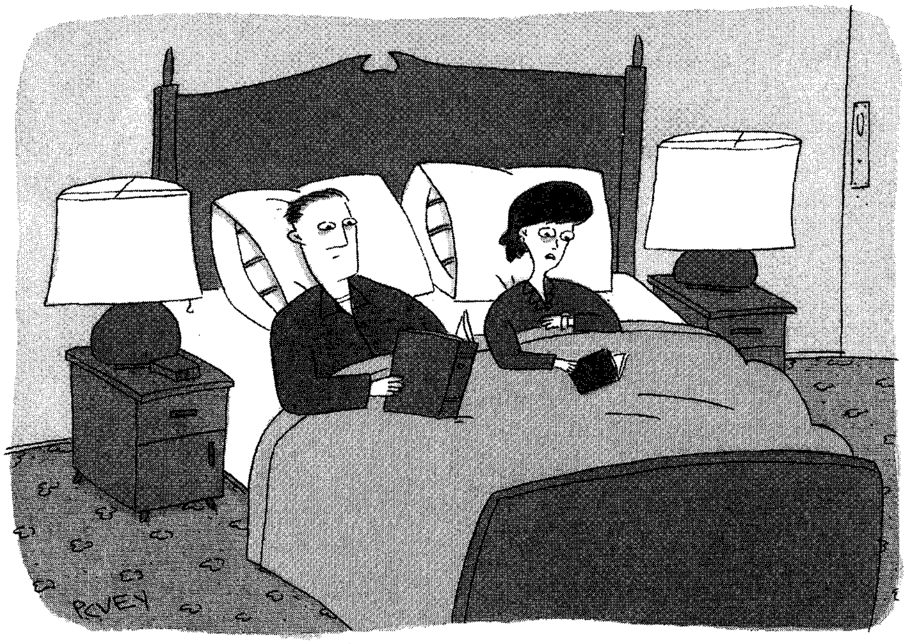
Though Anna could scarcely recognize anything in the kitchen visually, she had organized it in such a way that mistakes rarely, if ever, occurred, utilizing a sort of informal classification system instead of a direct perceptual gnosis. Thus things were categorized not by meaning but by color, by size and shape, by position, by context, by association, somewhat as an illiterate person might arrange the books in a library, or identify, by its appearance, a passage in a book. Everything had its place, and she had memorized this.

Seeing how Anna inferred the character of objects about her in this way, using color, above all, as a marker, I wondered how she would do with objects of similar appearance, like the fish knives and steak knives, which looked almost the same. This was a problem, she confessed, and she often confused them. Perhaps, I suggested, she could use an artificial marker, a little green dot for the fish knives, a red one for the steak knives, so that she could see the difference at a glance. Anna said she had already thought about this but was not sure she wanted to "flaunt" her problem to others. What would her guests think of color-coded cutlery and dishes, or a color-coded apartment? ("Like a psychological experiment," she said, "or an office.") The "unnaturalness" of such an idea disturbed her, but if the agnosia got worse, she agreed, she might need it.

In some cases where Anna's categorization system did not work, such as using the microwave, she could operate by trial and error. But if objects were not in their place, or were not a subject of knowledge and prediction, major difficulties could appear. This showed itself, startlingly, at the end of my visit. The three of us—Anna, Josef, and I—had sat down at the dining-room table. Anna had laid the table, put out biscotti and cakes, and now brought in a steaming pot of tea. She chatted as we ate, but retained a certain watchfulness, monitoring the position and movement of every dish, tracking everything (I later realized), so that it did not get "lost." She got up to take the empty dishes into the kitchen, leaving only the biscotti, which she saw that I especially liked. Josef and I chatted for a few minutes—our first talk alone—pushing the plate of biscotti between us.

When Anna came back, and I packed my bag and prepared to go, she said, "You must take the rest of the biscotti with you"—but now, bizarrely, she could not find them, and became upset, almost frantic, at this. They were right on the table in their dish—but since the dish had been moved she no longer knew where they were, or even where to look. She seemed to have no strategy for looking. She was, however, quite startled to see my umbrella on the table, though she failed to see it as an umbrella, saw only that something curved and twisted had appeared—and wondered, for a half-serious moment, if it was a snake.

Before I left, I asked Anna to go to the piano, asked if she might play something for me. She hesitated. It was clear that she had lost a good deal of her confidence. She started beautifully, on a Bach fugue, but broke off, apologetically, after



"It's almost twelve-thirty. Shouldn't you be heading home?"

a few bars. Seeing a volume of Chopin mazurkas on the piano, I asked about those, and now, encouraged, she closed her eyes, and played two of the Opus 50 mazurkas without faltering and with great brio and feeling.

She told me afterward that the printed music was just "lying around," and said, "It throws me off to see the score, people turning pages, my hands, or the keyboard," and that, in these circumstances, she might make mistakes, especially in her right hand. (I was reminded of a blind woman, a contemporary of Mozart and a most remarkable pianist, who, it is said, could no longer play after she regained some sight.) Thus Anna had to close her eyes and perform non-visually, using only her kinesthesia, her motor patterns, and her fine ear. Despite the loss of her ability to visualize the score, her playing had lost none of its brilliance.

Josef was due to leave for Europe in a few days, where he would teach master classes and judge competitions for several weeks—but he felt that he could leave Anna with complete confidence, knowing that she would manage perfectly well in his absence; she was quite able to get around in familiar surroundings, despite her agnosia.

But how would she manage in circumstances less familiar and predictable, how would she deal with the challenge of novel neighborhoods and streets? This I would have to investigate the next time I saw her.

And what could I say about the nature and progress of her strange disease? It had clearly advanced somewhat since her original neurological examination, in 1996, and there were hints—though no more than hints—that her problems might no longer be purely visual, or confined to the visual, occipital parts of the brain. In particular, she occasionally had difficulty naming objects, and would speak of a "thingmy" when she could not get the word, although I was not sure how to interpret this difficulty.

I had ordered a new MRI to compare with an earlier one, and it showed that there was now some shrinkage of the visual areas on both sides of the brain. Was there any sign of real damage elsewhere? I could not decide, although I suspected that there might have been some shrinkage in the hippocampi, too—parts of the brain crucial for the registration of new memories. But, it was clear, the damage was still largely, if not wholly, confined to the occipital lobes, and the rate of advance was very slow.

When I discussed these MRI findings with Josef, he stressed that in my conversation with Anna I should avoid certain terms, above all the frightening label of Alzheimer's disease. "It's *not* Alzheimer's disease, is it?" he said. Clearly, this had been much on their minds.

"I'm not sure," I said. "Not in the ordinary sense. One should see it as something much rarer, kinder, more benign."

Posterior cortical atrophy, PCA, so called because of the characteristic atrophy of the visual-association areas at the back of the brain, was described by Frank Benson, Jeffrey Davis, and Bruce Snyder in the *Archives of Neurology* in 1988. Occasional cases were probably seen, but not recognized for what they were, for a century before this. It takes an original eye to recognize a disease or syndrome for the first time, but a condition once recognized is more readily recognized when seen again, and dozens more cases of PCA have come to light in the fourteen years since Benson's description.

Such patients tend to present initially with complex visual disturbances—difficulties reading (alexias) or recognizing faces and objects (agnosias)—while more elementary forms of visual perception, such as movement and color perception, are perfectly preserved. Anna H. is the only patient, to my knowledge, whose first symptom was a musical alexia.

Visual difficulties may become profound quite early in the illness, and all of the patients originally described found themselves becoming disoriented and lost in their own neighborhoods, and even in their own homes. (Benson called this an "environmental agnosia.") Other difficulties commonly follow: left-right confusion, difficulty in writing and calculation, even an agnosia for one's own fingers (a tetrad of problems sometimes called Gerstmann's syndrome). One such patient, a touch typist, became unable to type. Sometimes patients with PCA may recognize objects but find themselves unable to name them, a so-called anomia.

In contrast to these difficulties, memory, intelligence, insight, and personality tend to be preserved until late in the course of the disease. Every patient described by Benson, he writes, "could present his or her own history, was aware of current events, and showed considerable insight into his or her predicament."

Thus, although PCA is clearly a de-

PERSONNEL
mankoff

"How do you feel about doing time?"

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generative brain disease, it seems quite different in character from the commonest forms of Alzheimer’s, where gross changes in memory and thinking, in the comprehension and use of language, and often in behavior and personality tend to dominate the picture, and insight into what is happening (perhaps mercifully) is generally lost early on.

In Anna H.’s case, the course of the disease seemed to have been particularly benign, for even now she had no environmental agnosia, did not get lost in her own home or neighborhood. She seemingly had no sign of Gerstmann’s syndrome, either, for she could add grocery bills in her head and write letters, had no left-right confusion, and remained as dexterous as ever with her fingers on the keyboard.

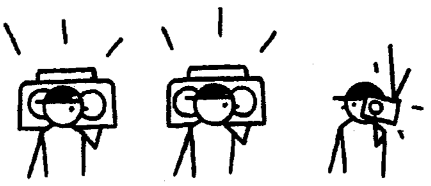
I could not help making a comparison, as Anna herself had, with my patient Dr. P., “the man who mistook his wife for a hat.” Both of them were highly gifted professional musicians; both developed severe visual agnosias, while being remarkably intact in many other ways; and both had discovered or developed ingenious ways around their problems, so that it was possible for them to keep teaching at the highest level in music colleges, despite what might appear to be quite devastating disabilities.

The actual ways in which Anna and Dr. P. coped with their illnesses were very different, a reflection in part of the severity of their symptoms, and in part of differences in temperament and training. Dr. P. was already in grave trouble when I saw him, barely three years after his initial symptoms. He not only had visual difficulties but tactile ones, too—witness his grasping his wife’s head and mistaking it for a hat; he showed a sort of levity or indifference, and little insight into the fact that he was ill, and he often confabulated to make up for the fact that he could not identify what he was seeing. This was in strong contrast to Anna, who, nine years after her first symptoms, had no substantial problems outside her visual ones, was still able to travel and teach, and showed acute insight into her own condition. Anna could still identify objects by inference, using her intact perceptions of color, shape, texture, and movement, along with her memory and intelligence. Dr. P. could not. He could not, for instance, identify a glove by sight or by feel (despite being able to describe it in almost absurdly abstract terms, as “a continuous surface infolded on itself [with] five outpouchings, if this is the word . . . a container of some sort?”)—until, by accident, he got it onto his hand. Dr. P., in general, was dependent on action, and came to a bewildered halt if the flow of action was stopped. Moreover, he was a professional singer, for whom singing was the most natural, irrepressible, spontaneous activity. This allowed his crucial discovery that he could bypass his agnosia to some extent by the use of songs; he would hum or sing dressing songs, shaving songs, action songs of all sorts. Music, he had found, could organize his activities, his daily life, to a remarkable degree.

I had seen Dr. P. in 1978, ten years before Benson and his colleagues described PCA. I was puzzled by the picture Dr. P. presented, the paradoxes of his illness. Clearly, he had a degenerative brain disease, yet it seemed quite different from any form of Alzheimer’s disease I had seen. But, if not Alzheimer’s, then what did he have? When I read about PCA in 1988—Dr. P. had died in the meantime—I wondered whether this in fact could have been his diagnosis.

But PCA is only an anatomical diagnosis; it denotes the part of the brain affected most, but says nothing of the underlying disease process, nothing of why these parts of the brain are damaged. It is similar, in a sense, to a clinical diagnosis (say, of autism) which indicates only a confluence of certain characteristic symptoms or signs or behaviors—a syndrome—but not the actual disease process (genetic, chemical, infectious, or whatever) that causes the syndrome.

When Benson described PCA in 1988, he had no information regarding the underlying pathology. His patients might have Alzheimer’s disease, he thought, but if so, it was Alzheimer’s with a strikingly atypical presentation. They might have Pick’s disease, a degenerative brain disorder more commonly affecting the frontal and temporal lobes of the brain. (Maurice Ravel is thought to have had this, so that he became unable to speak, or, tragically, compose.) They might even, Benson speculated, have vascular rather than degenerative disease, an accumulation of small blockages in the watershed zone between the posterior and carotid circulations of the brain.



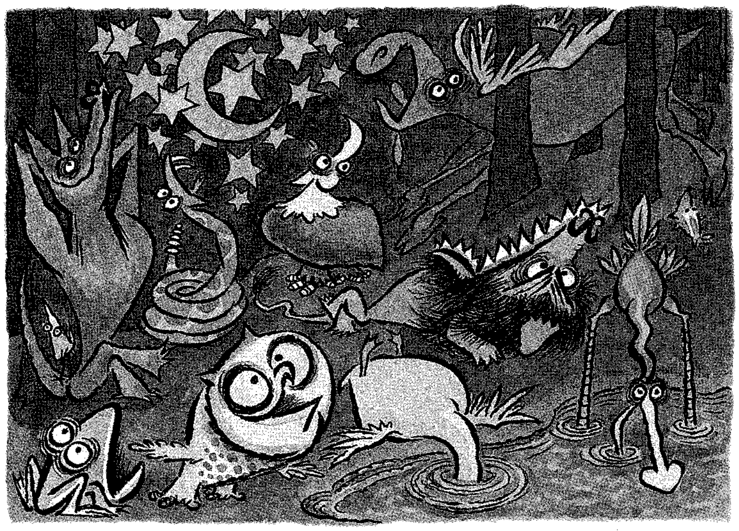
ARNOLD ROTH

In the early nineteen-nineties, it was established by other researchers that certain patients with PCA, upon autopsy, showed the characteristic microscopic plaques and tangles of Alzheimer’s disease, predominantly clustered in the posterior, visual parts of the brain. Not all PCA patients have Alzheimer’s, but the syndrome is now generally regarded as a “visual variant” of Alzheimer’s. It may, or may not, be that Anna H. has this form of the disease.

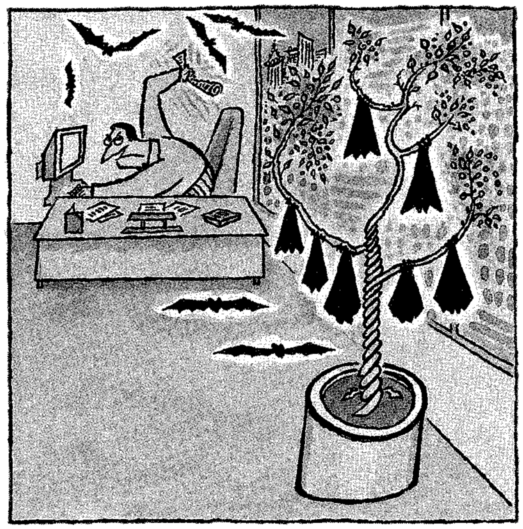
The very names of certain diseases inspire dread. This is especially so of Alzheimer’s disease—and its diagnosis may be taken almost as a death sentence. But this does not take into account the enormous variation there may be in the character and course of the disease, nor the varied adaptations and strategies by which life may be maintained and enjoyed despite the disease’s advance. I have seen malignant forms of Alzheimer’s that lead to profound dementia and death in a year, while other patients may have years of good life and decline only very slowly; I have seen patients in whom intellectual loss and personality change are prominent from the start, and others in whom such changes may not occur until the very last stages of the illness. Very slow decline, with preservation of insight and personality until very late, seems to be characteristic of the visual variant of Alzheimer’s. And in Anna H.’s case—if this is what she has—the course has been slower and more benign than in any other patient yet described.

In June of 1999, I revisited Anna and Josef in their apartment—Josef was just back from his weeks in Europe, and Anna, I gathered, had been moving freely within a four-block radius of their apartment, going to her favorite restaurant, shopping, etc. When I arrived, I saw that Anna had been sending cards to her friends all over the world—there were envelopes addressed

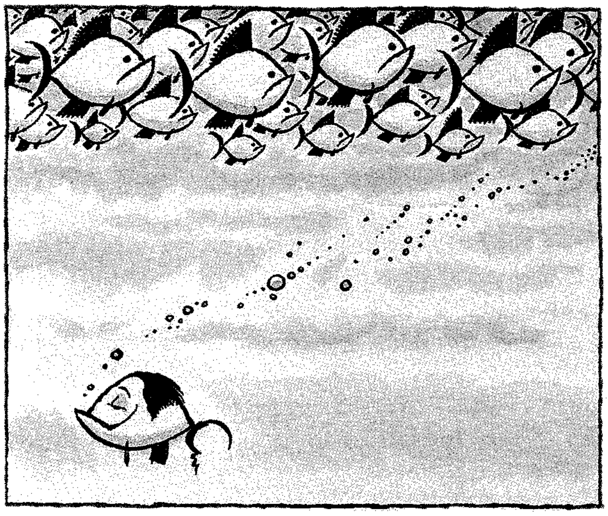
ANIMAL RIGHTS ....RIGHTS FOR WHICH HUMANS CAN ONLY YEARN.



THE RIGHT TO: STAY UP ALL NIGHT, DRINK, AND MAKE NOISE.



THE RIGHT TO: HANG AROUND IN TREES.



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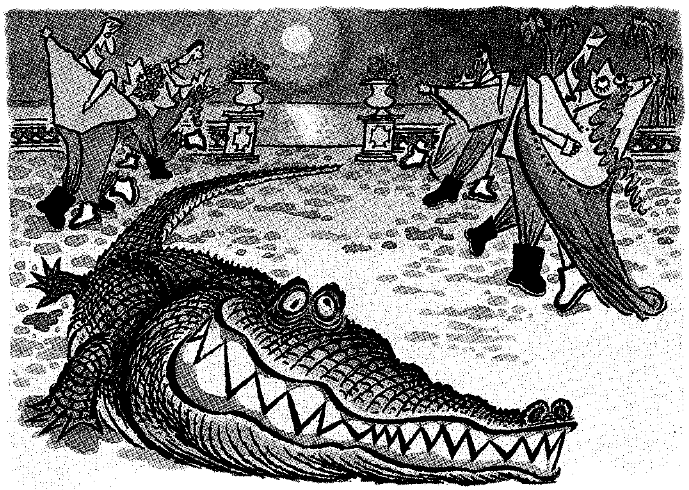
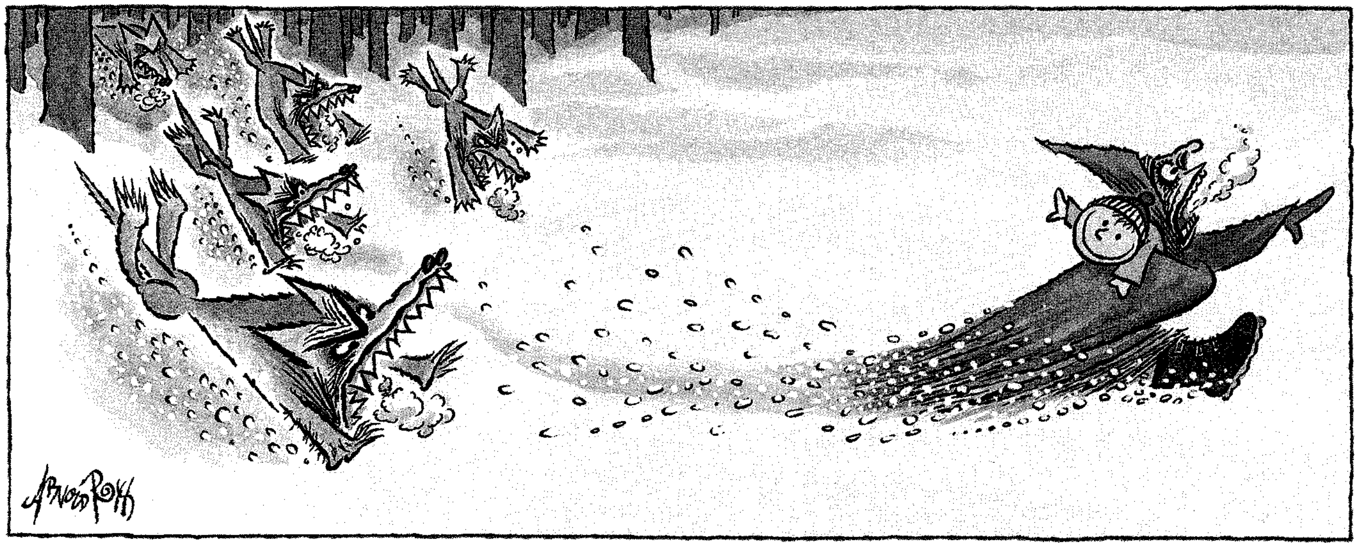


THE RIGHT TO: TRACK MUD EVERY WHERE.



THE RIGHT TO: HUNT WITHOUT A LICENSE.

"Before you come up, dear, don't forget to secure the perimeter."

to Korea, to Germany, to Australia, to Brazil, scattered all over the table. Her alexia, clearly, had not diminished her correspondence, though the names and addresses sometimes straggled over the envelope.

"Let's go out, let's wander," I said. Anna immediately started singing "Der Wanderer"—she loves Schubert—and then the elaboration of this in the "Wanderer" Fantasy.

In the elevator, she greeted some neighbors. It was not clear to me that she recognized them visually; it may have been that they spoke to her first. She instantly recognized voices, noises of all sorts; indeed, she seemed hyperacute here, or hyperattentive, as she did to colors and shapes. They had assumed a special importance as cues.

She had no difficulty crossing the street. She could not read the "Walk" and "Don't Walk" signs, but she knew their relative position and color; knew, too, that she could walk when the sign was blinking. She pointed out a synagogue on the corner opposite, and other shops she identified by their geometric patterns or colors, as with her favorite diner, which had alternating black and white tiles. At one point, we passed an enormous dog, which made me think of the Hound of the Baskervilles. Anna did not notice it at first, but when I drew her attention to it she thought its expression "patient and sweet" (I thought it murderous), and would have patted it had I not deflected her.

We went into a supermarket and got a cart—she headed instantly to the alcove where these were. She had no difficulty in finding the fruit-and-vegetable section, or in identifying apples, pears, carrots, yellow peppers, and asparagus. She said of a leek, "Is it a cousin of an onion?" and then got the word "leek." She was puzzled by a kiwifruit, until I let her handle it. (She thought it "delightfully furry, like a little mouse.") I reached up for an object hung above the fruit. "What is this?" I asked. Anna squinted, hesitated. "Is it edible? Paper?" When I let her touch it, she burst into somewhat embarrassed laughter. "It's an oven glove, a pot sticker," she said. "How could I be so silly?"

When we moved to the next section, Anna called out, "Salad dressings on the left, oils on the right," in the manner of a department-store elevator operator. She obviously had the entire supermarket in her head. Wanting a particular tomato sauce, one of a dozen different brands, she picked it out because it had "a deep-blue rectangle and below that a yellow circle" on its label. "Color is of the essence," she emphasized again. This is her most immediately visible cue, recognizable when nothing else is. (For that reason, fearing we might be separated, I had dressed entirely in red for our visit, knowing that it would allow her to spot me instantly if she got lost.)

But color was not always enough. If confronted with a plastic container, she might have no idea whether it contained peanut butter or cantaloupe. Often, she found that the simplest strategy was to bring in a used can or carton, and ask someone for help in matching it.

As we left the market, she accidentally crashed the shopping cart into a pile of shopping baskets to her right—such accidents, when they happen, are always to the right, because of the impaired visual awareness to this side.

Some months later, I arranged to see Mrs. H. in my own office rather than at the clinic, where she had come before. She arrived promptly, having made her way to Greenwich Village from Penn Station. She had been in New Haven the night before, where her husband had given a concert, and he had seen her onto a train that morning. "I know Penn Station like the back of my hand," she said, so she did not have problems there. But outside, in the melee of people and traffic, "there were many moments when I had to ask."

When I asked how she had been doing, she said her agnosia was getting worse. "When you and I went to the market together, there were many things I could recognize easily. Now, if I want to buy the same things, I have to ask people." In general, she had to ask others to identify objects for her, and sometimes to help her if there were awkward steps, sudden changes of level, or irregularities in the ground. She depended more on touch and on hearing (to make sure, for instance, that she was facing the right way). And she depended increasingly on her memory, her thinking, and her logic and common sense to help negotiate what would otherwise be—visually—an unintelligible world.

Yet, in my office, she immediately recognized herself on a CD cover, playing Chopin. "It looks slightly familiar," she said, with a smile.

I asked her what she saw on the wall of my office. First, she turned her chair not to the wall but to the window, and said, "I see buildings." Then I rotated her chair for her until she faced the wall. I had to take her through it bit by bit—"Do you see lights?" Yes, there, and there. It took a little while to establish that she was looking at a sofa under the lights, though its color was commented on at once. She observed something green lying on the sofa, and astonished me by saying, correctly, that it was a stretch cord. She said she had been given such a cord by her physiotherapist. Asked what she saw above the couch (a painting with abstract geometric forms), she said, "I see yellow . . . and black." What is it? I asked. Something to do with the ceiling, Anna hazarded. Or a fan. A clock. Then she added, "I haven't really found out whether it is one item or many." It was in fact a painting done by another patient, a color-blind painter. But clearly Mrs. H. had no idea that it was a painting, was not even sure that it was a single object, and thought that it might even be part of the structure of the room.

I found all this puzzling. How was it that she could not clearly distinguish a striking painting from the wall itself, yet instantly recognize a small photograph of herself on a CD? How could she identify a slender green stretch cord while failing to see, or recognize, the sofa it was on? And there had been innumerable such inconsistencies before.

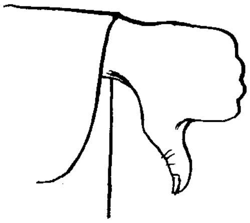
I wondered how she could read the time, since she was wearing a wristwatch. She could not read the numbers, she said, but could judge the position of the hands. I then showed her, mischievously, a strange clock I have, in which the numbers are replaced by the symbols of elements (H, He, Li, Be, etc.). She did not perceive anything the matter with this, as for her the chemical abbreviations were no more or less unintelligible than numerals would have been.

We went out for a walk, I in a bright-colored hat for recognition. Stopping at the first shopwindow, I asked Anna what she saw. "Straw hats," she said. (I had just shown her a large Mexican straw hat I had brought back from Oaxaca, and she had instantly recognized it visually.) The shopwindow, however, contained not straw hats but straw baskets. She was most bewildered by the objects in an adjacent window—but so was I. This was a Tibetan-handicrafts shop, but they could have been Martian handicrafts, given the exotic unfamiliarity of everything. The shop next to this, curiously, she recognized at once, and mentioned having passed it on her way to my office. It was a clock shop, with dozens of clocks of different sizes and shapes. She told me later that her father had had a passion for clocks.

A padlock on another store was a total puzzle, though Anna thought it might be something "to open up . . . like a hydrant." The moment she touched it, she knew what it was.

We stopped briefly for coffee, then I took her to my apartment, in the next block. I wanted her to try my grand piano, an 1894 Bechstein. Entering my apartment, she immediately recognized the grandfather clock in the hall. (Dr. P., by contrast, had tried to shake hands with a grandfather clock.) I played a couple of Chopin mazurkas for her, and she said, "Each one of them is a world of its own. . . . They are miniatures which are gigantic."

She then sat at the piano and played a piece—a piece that I found puzzling, for it seemed familiar to me in a way, yet unfamiliar, too. When I said this, Anna told me it was a Haydn quartet that she had heard on the radio and been enchanted by a couple of years before, and which, immediately, she longed to play herself. So she had arranged it for the piano, and had done this entirely in her head, overnight. She had occasionally arranged pieces for the piano before, using manuscript paper and with the original score in front of her, but when this became impossible because of her alexia she found that she could do it wholly by ear. She felt that her musical memory, her musical imagery, had become stronger, more tenacious, but also more flexible, so that she could hear the most complex music in her mind, hold it, alter it, rearrange it, and replay it mentally, in a way that would have been impossible before her alexia. Her continually strengthening powers of musical memory and imagery had indeed become crucial to her, kept her going, since the onset of her visual difficulties, nine years earlier.



I was reminded, when Anna told me this, of a patient I had seen in the hospital some years before, who had overnight become totally paralyzed from a fulminating myelitis. When it became evident that no recovery was forthcoming, she fell into despair, felt that her life was over—not only the great things of life but the little familiar pleasures of each day, like doing the *Times* crossword, to which she was addicted. She requested that the *Times* be brought to her each day, so that at least she could look at the crossword, get its configuration, run her eyes along the clues. And when she did this she found her mind doing something extraordinary—for now, as she looked at the clues, the answers seemed to write themselves, like hallucinations, in their spaces. Her visual imagery strengthened over the next few weeks, until she found that she was able to hold the entire crossword and its clues in her mind after a single, intense inspection; and then she could solve it, mentally, at her leisure later in the day. This became a source of great solace to her, in her paralysis; she had no idea, she later told me, that such powers of memory and imagery were available to her. (I now suspect that such powers are not too uncommon in visual thinkers; I know one artist, a highly geometric thinker, who does diagramless crosswords mentally, manipulating the letters and their squares in his head while he is painting.)

Anna's obvious confusion about what was what in my office, and in the little streets and shops around it, brought home to me how dependent she was on the familiar, the memorized; how anchored, in a sense, to her own apartment and her own neighborhood. In time, no doubt, if she were to visit a place frequently, she would gradually become more familiar with it, but this would be an almost unimaginably complex challenge, demanding great patience and resourcefulness, a whole new enterprise of categorization and memorization. It was clear to me, after this one visit of Anna's to my office, that in future I should stick to house calls, visiting her in her own apartment, where she felt organized, in control, at home. Going out, for her, was becoming an increasingly surreal visual adventure, full of fantastic and sometimes frightening misperceptions.

Anna H. wrote to me again in August of 2001, expressing growing concern. She said that she hoped I might be able to come soon for a visit, and I suggested the following weekend.

Anna stood by her door to welcome me, knowing, as she does, my own (congenital) defects of visual and topographic memory, my confusion of left and right, and my inability to find my way around in buildings. She welcomed me with great warmth, but also a touch of anxiety, which seemed to hover throughout the visit.

"Life is difficult," she began, after she had seated me and given me a glass of seltzer. She had difficulty finding the seltzer in her refrigerator, and, not seeing the bottle, which was "hidden" behind a jug of orange juice, she had taken to exploring the refrigerator by hand, groping for a bottle of the right shape. "It is not getting better. . . . The eyes are very bad." (She knows, of course, that her eyes are fine, and that it is the visual parts of the brain that are declining in function—indeed, she realized this before anyone else—but she finds it easier, more natural, to refer to her "bad eyes.") When I had gone shopping with her two years before, she seemed to recognize almost everything she saw, or at least had it coded by shape and color and location, so that she hardly ever needed help. At that time, too, she moved infallibly about her kitchen, never losing anything, working efficiently. Today, she "lost" both the seltzer and the schmaltz herrings—a losing that entailed not only not remembering where she put them but not recognizing them when she saw them. I also observed that the kitchen was less organized than it had been before—and organization is crucial in Mrs. H.'s situation.

Anna's anomia, her problems with word finding, had increased, too. When I showed her some kitchen matches, she recognized them at once, visually, but could not say the word "match," saying, instead, "That is to make fire." The Sweet'N Low, similarly, she could not name, but identified as "Better than Sugar." And at one point, looking for some condiments, she got worried because she could not find the "little red things" in the kitchen—these turned out to be the red-topped spice bottles. Anna was well aware of these difficulties, and her strategies for dealing with them. "When I can't say something," she explained, "I circumscribe." But it is only the names of visual objects, objects with appearances, which sometimes elude her. She has no difficulty with proper names, abstract nouns, musical terms, or the names for textures or smells or shapes or colors. Nor is there any compromise in her fluency or the organization of her speech, no larger linguistic problems. Her anomia, it seems, is integrally related to her visual problems, and not a form of aphasia in the usual sense.

When I asked her about travel and life generally, she said that although she had recently travelled to Ontario, to Colorado, and to Connecticut with her husband, she would not have been able to do this by herself, as she had only a few years before. But she said she remained quite capable of looking after herself at home when Josef was away. Still, she said, "When I am alone, it is lousy. I'm not complaining—I'm describing."

While Anna was in the kitchen at one point, I asked Josef how he felt about these problems, and he expressed sympathy and understanding, but added, "My impatience is provoked sometimes when I think that some of her weaknesses may be exaggerated. I'll give you an example. I get puzzled, annoyed sometimes, because Anna's 'blindness' is sometimes 'selective.' Last Friday, she noticed that a painting was hung lopsidedly by a few millimetres. And sometimes she comments on people's facial expressions in tiny photographs. She will touch a spoon and ask, 'What is this?' and then five minutes later look at a vase and say, 'We have a similar one.' I have found no pattern, only inconsistency. What should my attitude be when she grabs a cup and says, 'What's this?' I sometimes don't tell her. But this may be wrong, and the effect disastrous. What should I say?"

This was, indeed, a very delicate matter. How much should he intervene when she was faced with perceptual bewilderment? How much should we prompt a friend, or a patient, when he has forgotten someone's name? How much do I myself—with no sense of direction—wish to be told of my error, or to battle out the right way by myself? How much do any of us like to be "told" anything? The question was especially vexing with Anna, for, while she needed to work things out, fend for herself, her sensory difficulties were becoming more severe all the time, and they sometimes threatened, as Josef observed, to throw her into an abyss of bewilderment, a disintegrating terror. I could suggest no rule, I said to Josef, except that of tact: each situation would call for its own solution.

But I, too, was puzzled when Josef spoke of the extraordinary variations in Anna's visual function. Some of them, it seemed, went with the reduced and unstable function of her damaged visual cortex—just as, ten years earlier, when the first problems appeared, her ability to read music would come and go. Some of the variations might reflect fluctuations in blood flow. But some of the variations seemed to go with a decreasing ability, for whatever reason, to compensate in her usual way. Her ability to make use of her memory and her intellectual powers in place of direct visual recognition, I now felt, might also be diminishing at this point. Thus it was more important than ever to "code" things, to provide easily used sensory clues—above all, color, to which Anna remained intensely sensitive.

What intrigued me especially was Josef's mention of Anna's sudden abilities—her ability, for example, to recognize facial expressions on a tiny photograph, since most of the time she had the greatest difficulty recognizing people at all. I could not help wondering whether this was an example of the preconscious abilities she had shown on earlier testing—her ability, for example, to instantly categorize pictures as "living" or "non-living" before she could consciously recognize them (and even when she could not recognize them at all). Such unconscious recognition (so-called "blindsight") might still be possible to some extent despite her agnosia, despite her cortical damage, because it made use of more primitive mechanisms in the visual system which, presumably, were still intact.

Anna has been ingenious, and resilient, since her illness started, eleven or twelve years ago. She has brought brilliant resources of every kind to her own aid—visual, musical, emotional, intellectual. Her family, her friends, her husband above all, but also her students and colleagues, helpful people in the supermarket or on the street—everyone has helped her cope. Her adaptations to the agnosia have been extraordinary—a lesson in what can be done to hold together a life in the face of severe perceptual and cognitive challenge. But it is in her art, her music, that Mrs. H. not only copes with disease but transcends it. This is clear when she plays the piano, an art that both demands and provides a sort of superintegration, a total integration of sense and muscle, of body and mind, of memory and fantasy, of intellect and emotion, of one's whole self, of being alive. Her musical powers, mercifully, have remained untouched by her disease. ("Nothing wrong with my ears or my hands, thank God.")

So I had a special sense of sadness during this visit in the summer of 2001, for Anna had injured her back in a fall, and sitting was painful, and I could not even ask her to play the piano, as I usually did. Her piano playing had always added a transcendent note to my visits, and it recalled her, no less crucially, to her identity as an artist, and showed the joy she could still get and give, whatever other problems were now closing in on her.

When I revisited Mr. and Mrs. H. not long ago, I found the apartment full of balloons. "It was my birthday," Anna explained. "Three days ago." She did not look well, and seemed somewhat frail, although her voice and her warmth were entirely unchanged. She said that her visual powers had deteriorated further, and this was all too evident as she groped for a chair to sit down on, walked in the wrong direction, or got lost inside her own apartment—something of which there had been no hint before. Her behavior now looked much more "blind," reflecting not only her increasing inability to decipher what faced her but her complete lack of visual orientation and searching and gaze. She had difficulty picking out any shapes now, though her sense of color and motion were as acute as ever.

She is still able to write letters, but reading, even the painfully slow letter-by-letter reading that she could do a few years ago, has become impossible. She adores being read to—Josef reads her items from the papers and from books—and I promised to send her some audiotapes. She goes out a little, walking around the block on her husband's arm. The two of them are very close, closer than ever now, with her increasing disability.

Despite all this, Anna feels her ear is as good as it always was, and she has been able to continue a little teaching, with students from the music college coming to the house. Apart from this, she says, she does very little playing now.

And yet, when I mentioned the Haydn quartet she had played for me before, her face lit up. "I was absolutely enthralled," she said. "I'd never heard it before. It's never played." And she described for me again how, unable to get it out of her head, she had arranged it, mentally, for the piano, overnight. I asked her to play it for me again. Anna first demurred, and then, persuaded, encouraged, started for the piano, but went in the wrong direction. Josef corrected her, gently. At the piano, she first blundered, hitting wrong notes, and seemed anxious and confused. "Where am I?" she cried, and I thought, Oh, God, she can no longer play. But then, oriented to the keyboard, she found her place and began to play beautifully, the sound soaring up, melting, twisting into itself. Even Josef was amazed and moved by this. "She hasn't played at all for two or three weeks," he whispered to me. As she played, Anna stared upward, singing the melody softly to herself. She played with consummate artistry, with all the power and feeling she had shown before, when, as the Haydn drew to its final, resolving chords, after a furious turbulence, a musical altercation, she said, simply, "All is forgiven." ♦

THE IRON CHEF AT HOME
YUCK! What smells so DISGUSTING?
Why can't we just order a pizza, like everyone else?
Whatever it is you're making, it sure is using a lot of pots and pans.

A REPORTER AT LARGE

OUR NEW BEST FRIEND

Who needs Saudi Arabia when you've got São Tomé?

BY JON LEE ANDERSON

Until recently, the Democratic Republic of São Tomé and Príncipe, an island nation off the west coast of Africa, was significant only to stamp collectors and a few wealthy sportfishermen. São Tomé, which is the collective name most outsiders use to refer to the two islands that make up the republic, produces more Marilyn Monroe stamps than any other country—nine versions—and it has one of the two best tarpon-fishing waters on the planet. Some people might also recognize São Tomé from their phone bills, since the Portuguese telecommunications company that controls the state telephone business allows phone-sex services to route calls through São Tomé. A small amount of high-quality cocoa is also produced there. But none of these enterprises bring in much money. São Tomé is one of the world's most indebted and most impoverished nations.

The islands lie in the Gulf of Guinea, pretty much on the equator. They have a combined land mass of three hundred and seventy-two square miles, more or less the size of metropolitan Indianapolis. They were discovered by the Portuguese in the late fifteenth century, when they were essentially rain forests, uninhabited by humans but full of crocodiles, venomous cobras, many unique species of plants, and more kinds of ferns than anywhere else on the planet. The Portuguese used the islands as a transshipment base for slaves on their way from Africa to Brazil, and slave owners cut down trees and developed plantations that produced sugar and then, early in the nineteenth century, coffee and cocoa. In 1907, British chocolate-makers protested the use of slave labor in São Tomé, and the Portuguese colonists were pressured into adopting supposedly fairer policies, although forced labor continued in one form or another right up until the islands gained their independence, in 1975.

Unlike most of Europe's colonial dependencies in Africa, São Tomé became a republic without bloodshed, following the ascension in Lisbon of a left-wing military junta and the end of the dictatorship established by António Salazar. Most of the Portuguese colonists who were still living in São Tomé, two or three thousand people, simply packed up and went home, leaving behind more than a hundred thousand blacks and mestizos. Nothing very much has happened there since then. Even during the late nineteen-seventies and the eighties, when the country was aligned with the Soviet bloc and was full of Angolan troops and Russian, Chinese, and Cuban advisers, it barely registered on the geopolitical radar. In 1991, there was a peaceful transition from one-party rule to democracy. Much like its independence from Portugal, São Tomé's official shedding of Marxism was managed without commotion.

The President of São Tomé, Fradique de Menezes, a cocoa trader known to nearly everyone by his first name, came to the United States a few weeks ago. He addressed the U.N. during the international commemoration of the attack on the World Trade Center, and the next morning he and ten other African heads of state had breakfast with President Bush at the Waldorf-Astoria. Afterward, there was a meeting at which the African leaders gave five-minute speeches, most of them in French. Bush tapped his pencil and looked bored. Then Fradique, who was seated next to Bush, rose and spoke eloquently, in beautiful, lightly accented English, of the common interests of São Tomé and the United States. Bush perked up. The pencil-tapping ceased. "Long before the tragic attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, energy security was a world concern," Fradique said. He mentioned the importance of "alternative sources of oil outside the politically volatile Middle East," and reminded his listeners that São Tomé "is strategically situated on the most important petroleum area in the world today: the deep water off the western coast of Africa in the Gulf of Guinea." It is a place, Fradique said, that was referred to in Vice-President Cheney's National Energy Policy report as "the fastest-growing source of oil and gas for the American market."

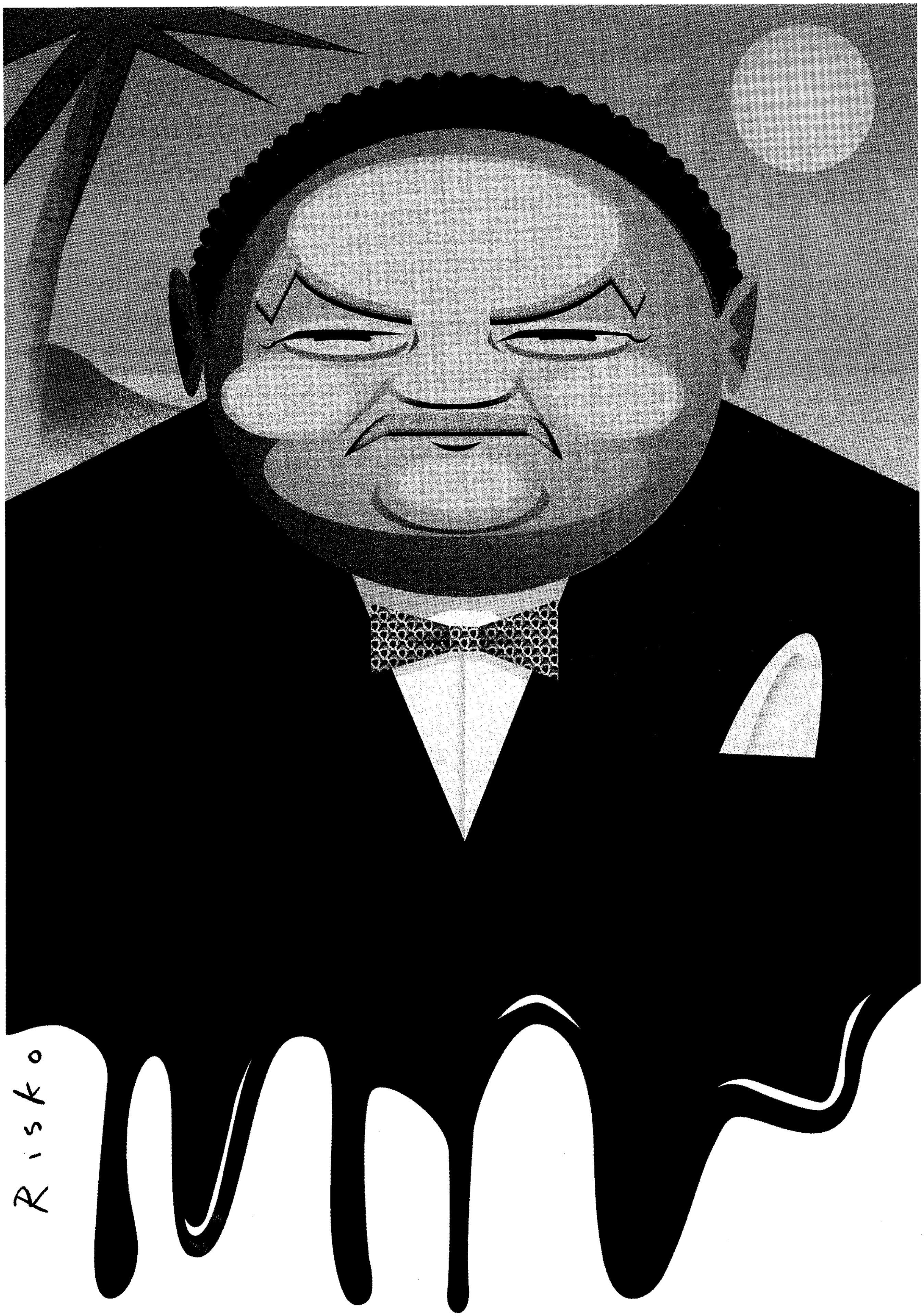
In fact, São Tomé is sitting on reserves of perhaps four billion barrels of crude oil. Even if one uses a conservative number for the price of a barrel, say twenty dollars, it is clear that São Tomé and the United States do indeed have common interests.

"This is the thinking," a State Department official said to me. "We import fifty per cent of our oil. Supplier number one is Canada, two is Saudi Arabia, three is Venezuela, four is Mexico, and five is Nigeria. Folks have finally figured out that we don't need to rely on the Middle East for oil. African oil is less sticky than the stuff you get in the Middle East, and much of it is in deep water far offshore, so the natives don't notice it being taken, whereas in the Middle East it's pumped out of the ground under the noses of Wahhabi fundamentalists. Then you have São Tomé, which is basically the only stable democracy in West Africa. It's perfect."

Nigeria, which is São Tomé's neighbor to the north, now produces about two million barrels of oil a day, more than half of which goes to the United States. Seismic studies made of São Tomé's waters that are closest to the Niger River delta, where the river sediments in the sea create rich oil beds, indicate that several "significant deposits" of oil lie under the ocean floor in depths ranging from twenty-four hundred to

ROBERT RISKO

President Fradique de Menezes of São Tomé is seeking protection for his little country, which is about to be very rich.


Risko

nine thousand feet. "In oil-industry jargon, 'significant' means at least a billion barrels in place," William Brumbaugh, an oil consultant who has worked for several American oil companies, explained to me. The technology for extracting oil from deep offshore reserves has improved considerably in the last few years. There is talk, probably exaggerated, of São Tomé's having two hundred years' worth of oil reserves at production levels of five hundred thousand barrels a day. Most of its waters have not yet been mapped, but Brumbaugh reckoned that São Tomé would soon be a very rich little country. "São Tomé has the potential to be another Brunei," a U.S. government official said. "Dividing up billions of dollars of oil money among a hundred and forty thousand people"—the current population of the islands—"will make them all very comfortable one day. If they manage to pull it off, and keep the bad guys at bay, it'll be a first in Africa. Otherwise, they'll end up like Angola, Part II."

American and European oil companies, principally Chevron, have been extracting Angola's oil for decades, mostly from rigs off the coast at Cabinda, an Angolan enclave five hundred miles southeast of São Tomé. In Angola and elsewhere in Africa, the oil companies operate with little or no oversight, and they pay huge "signature bonuses," sometimes amounting to hundreds of millions of dollars, to their host governments in return for oil concessions. These payments usually end up in the private bank accounts of whatever privileged class is running the country. "Oil provides the government of Angola with three billion to five billion dollars a year," Gavin Hayman, of Global Witness, an environmental watchdog group, says. "So why can't it feed, shelter, and educate its people?"

São Tomé is in a very rough neighborhood. The most immediate problem is Nigeria, one of Africa's most endemically violent and corrupt countries. A treaty signed by Fradique's predecessor, Miguel Trovoada, settled a dispute over the maritime borders of São Tomé and Nigeria and gave Nigeria a preëminent role in a joint authority that was set up to administer their shared oil bounty. Fradique also inherited a series of questionable contracts that ceded sweeping exploration and drilling rights for a number of offshore oil blocks in São Toméan waters to a subsidiary of a Nigerian corporation.

Fradique became President a year ago, in an election that was pretty much controlled by Trovoada, whose term was up. São Tomé has had only three Presidents since independence. The first one, Manuel Pinto da Costa, was getting a medical checkup in Lisbon this summer, and I stopped to see him on my way to Africa. Pinto da Costa is a handsome, genial mulatto man of sixty-five. He was staying in a small three-star hotel near the old city center, and he met me in his room. Pinto da Costa was the President of São Tomé for fifteen years, until 1991, and he still wields a great deal of moral authority. Last spring, his party, the Movimento de Libertação de São Tomé e Príncipe, won a majority of seats in parliamentary elections, forcing the government into a national unity coalition.

"Melanie, find me a little pro-bono case to cleanse my palate."

Pinto da Costa ran the country during its Marxist period. He was educated in Lisbon, France, and East Germany, and received a Ph.D. in economics from Humboldt University in Berlin. "Back in 1975, we didn't have many choices," he said. "We couldn't go with God—the West—so we went with the Devil." He laughed at his joke. "On that first independence day of ours, I was only thirty-seven years old. I had no experience in anything. I thought I was dreaming. I remember the Portuguese flag going down, the São Toméan flag going up, then walking into the palace and thinking, What am I going to do now? At the time, seventy-three per cent of our people were illiterate; only six or seven people had university educations. All anyone knew was the culture of cocoa, and that had been in decline for decades. It was an enormous challenge. By 1985, we had reduced illiteracy by fifty per cent; I even taught people how to read and write myself. And we reduced poverty. Health and education were free. For the West, this was Communist stuff. We nationalized the plantations. What else could we do? The Portuguese had abandoned them. We asked the Portuguese to come back, but they laughed at us."

Pinto da Costa called on Mao, Castro, and Kim Il Sung. The Chinese built the National Assembly, a great white modernist conference center with a thousand seats that still hulks, mostly unused, at the edge of the sea in São Tomé, the capital city. The Cubans sent doctors, teachers, and military instructors, and provided scholarships to hundreds of São Toméans; the East Germans built a brewery. Angola's Marxist government supplied free shipments of oil. The Russians set up a radar tracking station for civil aviation.

Nonetheless, Pinto da Costa began to deal with the West. In 1987, after the International Monetary Fund and the

A SALT DISH

At a table the size of my writing table, Horace's
happy man sits polishing his father's
salt dish, wearing the outer surface out, making it shine.

How small happiness seems, compared say
to the roller coaster they unveiled in
Florida, its corkscrew tail a football field long.

Today, I watched my friend descend his entryway
stairs in so much pain he seemed to move
through lava, lava pooling and pooling where

his limbs tried to take root, his light feet trying
to be heavy stone, not feather down, and
the fucked eventuality of his body worried every step.

Small meaningful trinkets for the rest of us. Heirlooms.
Something to hold a handful of material, some
vessel where the otherwise always loosening self will settle.

—*Dan Chiasson*

World Bank helped coördinate a "structural adjustment" program, the United States provided agricultural-development credits, and trained some São Toméan soldiers. In 1989, Pinto da Costa convened a constituent assembly to create a new constitution, which paved the way for multiparty elections, although he chose not to run. Around this time, Jan Hartman, a U.S. State Department officer then stationed in Gabon who had got interested in São Tomé, told him that the Voice of America's transmitter in Liberia had been destroyed during the civil war there. One of the last things Pinto da Costa did before leaving office was to invite the Voice of America to erect a relay station in São Tomé. In 1993, the fifty-four-million-dollar facility began sending programs to the African mainland.

"I thought that a U.S. presence in São Tomé was important for our equilibrium," Pinto da Costa said. "We are surrounded by Francophone and Anglophone countries. And it is especially important now, in this globalized world, and with the coming of oil, because I know that this is a mafioso world, full of dirty tricks, and without being connected to a powerful country like the U.S., São Tomé would be absorbed, swallowed up. Oil can be a blessing or a curse."

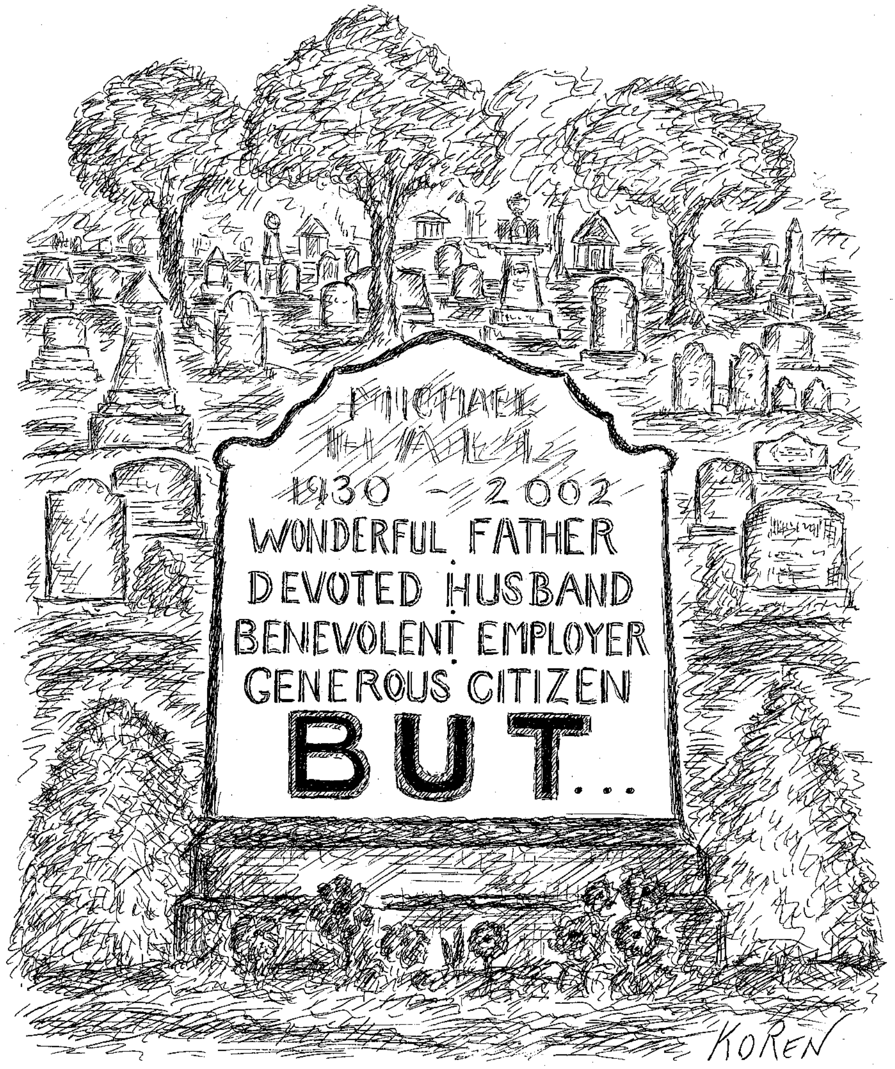
When I left him, Pinto da Costa was preparing to go out for the evening. He and a friend, the former President of Cape Verde, were seeing a recent Richard Gere movie, "Unfaithful," which was playing down the street.

There is a flight from Lisbon to São Tomé once a week. It arrives at daybreak, descending over fog-shrouded jungle mountains to a tiny, remarkably orderly—for Africa—airport where a few soldiers in clean and pressed uniforms stand discreetly off to the side. The road into town runs along a palm-fringed bay, past villas on stilts with tin walls, terra-cotta-tile roofs, and deep wooden porches. Derelict boats, half sunk, form a rusting line near the sleepy port, where a few intact boats bob at anchor. The town is built along two adjoining ocean bays, with a seaside avenue, a promenade lined with flowering shade trees, and, in the center, a clutch of graceful, balconied buildings dating from the colonial period. The tallest building on the island is a seven-story, Soviet-era concrete office block near the seafront. There are never very many people on the streets, except in the crowded bazaar, and there are almost no automobiles.

In the evening of the first day I was in São Tomé, Henrique Pinto da Costa, the former President's younger brother, picked me up at my hotel in his Jeep. Henrique is an agricultural economist and works, he said, as an unpaid consultant to President Fradique. We drove out of town on one of the little roads leading up into the cool mountains at the center of the island, passing a string of shanties and a verdant riot of cacao trees. After about twenty minutes, we reached Fradique's hacienda, Quinta da Favorita.

A guard with a gun and a walkie-talkie let us through a yellow iron swing gate. We parked in front of another gateway, beyond which I could see a large house with sweeping stairways, verandas, and a swimming pool. Two rustic open longhouses made of hardwood, one of them built around the roots of a huge rubber tree, straddled the driveway. Guards escorted us to the living room of the house, where several Presidential aides were sitting on couches, watching the news on a huge television set. The room was decorated in a hodge-podge way. There were a few African wood sculptures, and several local paintings on the walls, of the kind one sees in souvenir shops. The ceiling had exposed hardwood beams, but the floor was covered in shiny white vinyl. There were floral-print sofas, a liquor trolley, and a simple wooden dining table. The contents of a CD stand next to the TV indicated that the President's tastes ran to Barry White.

Fradique was in an adjacent room meeting with his ambassador to Taiwan. They were discussing the reception of the Taiwanese President, Chen Shui-bian, who was arriving the next day. It was a big moment for São Tomé. Taiwan provides ten million dollars in aid every year: about one-third of São Tomé's annual budget. After a few minutes, Fradique, a small, stout man in a short-sleeved African collarless suit, came out to greet me. He is sixty, light-skinned, with kinky black hair, a gray mustache, and wily, slightly almond-shaped eyes. His father was Portuguese and his mother was São Toméan. Fradique waved me, Henrique Pinto da Costa, and his aides over to the table. "Come and eat," he said. Supper was baked grouper and rice, followed by tropical fruit and flan for dessert. The TV blared away as we ate, and Fradique's eyes darted to the screen



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frequently. He observed that a man being interviewed by a reporter had been the head of São Tomé's military garrison and had tried, unsuccessfully, to pull off a military coup in 1995, when Fradique was a member of parliament. "Can you imagine this guy as the President?" he asked, and guffawed. The man was dark-skinned, and had a rough manner of speaking. Fradique was educated in Lisbon and Brussels and worked for several American companies, including I.T.T. and Archer Daniels Midland. After independence, he was São Tomé's ambassador to the European Union and then a government minister, before becoming a businessman.

Seeing the coup-plotter, or perhaps something else, had put Fradique into a bad mood, and he began complaining about the dearth of trustworthy people in his government, and the lack of initiative among the citizenry. "If you drive around São Tomé, you see all these able-bodied young men sitting outside at ten in the morning in front of their houses, drinking and playing cards. What do I do about them?" São Tomé, he said, had been an economic mess since the breakup of the cocoa plantations. "São Tomé will have to gain some benefits from its oil," he said. "There simply isn't enough money coming in from cocoa anymore to run the country."

Fradique mentioned that he'd been visited a few days earlier by executives from Chevron-Texaco. "They made a big point to talk about their humanitarian programs," he said, and handed me some brochures the Americans had given him, which illustrated their social consciousness in other places in Africa where they drilled for oil, such as Cabinda. Fradique looked skeptical. He was getting a lot of overseas visitors, he said. And Olusegun Obasanjo, the President of Nigeria, had held his hand at a recent meeting. "They all treat me like I am their sweetheart," he cackled. "I wonder why?"

There was a parade for the Taiwanese President the next morning, and then a series of meetings. A few days later, I stopped by the Taiwanese Embassy and talked to the ambassador, Tai-Son Ko. He said that his government had made many contributions to São Tomé over the years, in addition to outright financial aid. It had built the new Biblioteca Nacional just down the boulevard, and had restored the Art Deco cinema across the street. During President Chen Shui-bian's visit, he had promised to help Fradique with São Tomé's malaria problem, which is acute. "Malaria is an impediment to development and outside investment," Tai-Son Ko said. He also filled me in on rumors that the United States was going to build a military base on São Tomé. He thought it was a good idea. "This is a very strategic area," he said, "and the São Toméans are friendly. They are Catholics, not Muslims, and there is no anti-American feeling here."

Not long afterward, Kenneth Moorefield, the American ambassador in Gabon, who is accredited to São Tomé and Príncipe, arrived from Libreville and hosted a cocktail party in a reception room at the Miramar, the hotel where I was staying. Moorefield is a fit, middle-aged Texan, a career foreign-service officer, but a newcomer to Africa. He took up his post in April. If the U.S. intends to step up its presence in the region militarily, Moorefield is probably the right man for the job. A West Point graduate, he earned a Silver Star and a Purple Heart in Vietnam, where he served two tours as an Army infantry officer. Moorefield did not want to be drawn out about U.S. intentions in São Tomé. "The idea of a home port needs to be studied," he said to me cautiously, "although there are no plans for this at the moment, and there are different ways of assuming a strategic presence. It doesn't necessarily have to be a base or a port with all the commitment and investment that implies. You have to build the damned thing, and then, God knows, you have to protect it. But if you believe that this is an area of enhanced strategic importance, and I do, then the U.S. must adopt a new level of relationship with the region. If you see that fifteen per cent of our oil comes from this area, and this could soon be thirty per cent, then *x* plus *y* makes *z*. It doesn't take a genius to work that out."

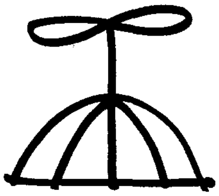
I accompanied Moorefield and his wife and daughter to the airport. We stood outside the little terminal, looking out over the bay. Moorefield commented on its beauty and how peaceful it seemed. "I hope it doesn't become violent with the influx of consumer goods, which will inevitably accompany the oil boom," he said. "Oil has never meant good things for underdeveloped countries except where autocratic regimes have been in place to keep the lid on." It was still possible to imagine how it must have been in colonial times, with the charming villas and people promenading on the seafront. "It reminds me of Hanoi," he said.

Fradique had hired two lawyers to sort out his problems with the oil contracts. The day that they arrived in São Tomé, Fradique invited us all up to dinner at Quinta da Favorita. He had set up a table outside, next to the swimming pool, and his cabinet ministers and senior advisers were there, including several who, as officials of the government of Miguel Trovoada, had negotiated the oil contracts Fradique now wanted to break. One of them, Rafael Branco, had been Trovoada's foreign minister. Branco had signed some of the controversial concessions and the maritime treaty with the Nigerians. Nonetheless, Fradique had appointed Branco as his oil minister. It seemed a counterintuitive thing to do, but, as someone close to the government explained it to me, Fradique was following "the L.B.J. theory that it's better to have him inside the tent pissing out than outside the tent pissing in."

The two lawyers were Americans: Greg Craig and Michael O'Connor, of the Washington firm of Williams & Connolly. Fradique greeted Craig effusively. "I am honored," he said. "I have seen you, I think, many times, on CNN." (Craig has had several high-profile clients: John Hinckley, President Clinton during the Monica Lewinsky episode, Elián González's father.) Fradique was in an exuberant mood, and drank French champagne before dinner, red wine with dinner, and whiskey afterward. Everything was self-service, and Fradique popped the champagne himself. He chatted about the oil contracts with Greg Craig, who mentioned that he didn't have all the documents he needed. Fradique said that he would have what Craig wanted photocopied straightaway, but the various aides seated around the table began squabbling about who should go to the photocopying machine. "You are the chief of staff, you should go do it," one said. The chief of staff retorted sourly, "Why don't you?" and didn't budge from his chair. In the end, Fradique did the photocopying himself, accompanied by Henrique Pinto da Costa.

Greg Craig told me that he had become interested in São Tomé a few weeks earlier, when he received a call from Joseph P. Kennedy II, the former congressman from Boston, who heads the Citizens Energy Corporation. Kennedy had met Fradique and thought Craig might be able to give him the legal help he needed. (Craig worked for many years for Senator Edward Kennedy.) "Here was a little country that had not yet been destroyed by big oil," Craig said. "The idea is to put together something that will somehow change the model for an oil-producing state."

Craig and O'Connor stayed in São Tomé for two weeks, going through the oil contracts and meeting daily with Fradique and his advisers. One afternoon, I went to see Rafael Branco. He was dressed in a mauve embroidered African tunic and pantaloons and wore a gold Rolex watch. Branco acknowledged that he was worried about what Craig was up to. He drew a crude map that showed São Tomé and Príncipe and the coast of Nigeria, and then a line indicating where the supposed maritime boundary was. "Now, this is where the real line is," he said, "and this is where the Nigerians insisted it was." He drew a line much closer to São Tomé. "During the arbitration, I felt it was important to retain this"—he pointed to the gap between the two lines—"even though it was forty per cent for us and sixty for them, because if we had gone to the International Court of Justice the boundary might have ended up in their favor, and we might have lost the part that seems likely to have the greatest oil reserves. It's not for nothing that Exxon Mobil is obsessed only about the five blocks there"—he pointed to the boundary line. "They must know something. And, in the end, better something than nothing. I would rather have less money and more internal stability." He said that he hadn't profited from the deal, which is what everyone assumes. "I swear that I made no money out of it; you can take my word or not." Branco said that he was concerned about the consequences if the Nigerians felt that the arrangement was falling apart. "This reworking or contesting of the contracts is seriously affecting vested interests in Nigeria, and also here, that is clear." Branco arched his eyebrows. "It's a particularly delicate moment."



One evening, I had a drink with Fradique at Quinta da Favorita. He was in his downstairs office sending e-mails when I arrived. After a few minutes, he came out to the swimming pool, where an aide had seated me. He complained about his computer, saying that he thought it had a virus. Then he went back to the office for a few minutes, and when he returned he was muttering. "Oh, forget it," he said, more or less to himself, and he sat down and seemed to relax. Twiggy, an abandoned dog he'd found wandering the streets and brought home, sat under the table at my feet, scratching his fleas.

I asked Fradique to explain what was wrong with the oil deals. It wasn't the sixty-forty split of territory with Nigeria that was the problem. "That's O.K. with me," he said. But Nigeria had been ceded extremely preferential powers in choosing which blocks of reserves it could exploit. The most serious problem stemmed from a deal that had been signed several years ago with the Environmental Remediation Holding Corporation, E.R.H.C., a company based in Houston, which had promised to undertake exploration on behalf of São Tomé and to publicize and promote its oil reserves. The deal had fallen apart and gone into arbitration. "Then suddenly Chrome, a Nigerian company, said they were going to buy E.R.H.C.," Fradique said, "like some kind of a miracle, and that they wanted to help São Tomé and Príncipe settle things. They described themselves as 'African brothers,' and they proposed a new agreement, in return for benefits to themselves." Chrome Energy Corporation is owned by Sir Emeka Offor, a wealthy businessman who was closely associated with the late Nigerian dictator Sami Abacha—who stole an estimated four billion dollars from the state while he was in power, from 1993 to 1998—and is now close to President Obasanjo. In May of last year, around the time Miguel Trovoada approached Fradique and asked him if he would like to become São Tomé's next President, a deal with E.R.H.C., which by then was a subsidiary of Chrome, was signed.

"Did money change hands, do you think?" I asked Fradique.

"I have no proof of that," he said. "Maybe journalists can help find out." He guffawed. A big cockroach scuttled under the table, and Fradique tried to stamp on it but missed.

"When I actually read the contracts, I couldn't accept them," Fradique said, bitterly. "This is business. Each person is trying to win the good piece of cake for himself. I have no problem with that. But here we are playing with the lives of one hundred and forty thousand people in São Tomé and Príncipe, who live in misery—O.K., not as great misery as others in Africa, but still badly. I'm not promoting a contest of the poor, but here you can see places where there is no running water, no lights, destroyed roads, no jobs, malaria. We're a poor country. So why should we jeopardize our chances?"

Gavin Hayman, of Global Witness, told me later that he had seen the offending contracts and that Fradique was right to challenge them. "The E.R.H.C.-São Tomé deal has been described as one of the worst in the oil industry's checkered history," Hayman said. "E.R.H.C. got an incredibly lucrative arrangement under almost totally opaque conditions."

"You see some of those contracts and you scratch your head," Joe Kennedy said to me later. "You can't just give away the patrimony of a country, and that's what was going on there." Kennedy is enthusiastic about Fradique's chances of keeping São Tomé out of the pattern of corruption that the other African oil states have fallen into. "He's the real deal," Kennedy said. "São Tomé could become the Monaco of Africa."

Fradique went public with his criticism of the "lack of transparency" in the deals a few months after he was elected, and threatened to cancel the agreements unless they were renegotiated. But things got a little sticky, because it turned out that some of the money for Fradique's campaign, which was managed by Trovoada's son, Patrice, came from none other than E.R.H.C./Chrome. The implication, of course, was that the Trovoadas received money from the Nigerians in return for the concessions, and that they had tried to buy off Fradique—but that he wouldn't go for it.

Until the issue of the oil deals came up, Patrice Trovoada had been Fradique's foreign minister, and Fradique fired him. Relations with the Nigerians also soured. "I think that Obasanjo is sincere," Fradique said, "but there are other people around him." The Nigerians do not have a good track record of adhering to agreements, and they are a daunting enemy. "The Nigerians are trying to push a mutual defense treaty on São Tomé that would involve several hundred Nigerian troops coming into the country," Gavin Hayman said. "Fradique is terrified of this and trying to get out of it." A close adviser to Fradique confirmed that Obasanjo had asked Fradique to accept such an arrangement. He was wide-eyed. "Can you imagine? They wanted to send two hundred soldiers here," he said. "They could have taken this place over in five minutes. Bye-bye São Tomé government." São Tomé's entire "army" doesn't have more than two hundred soldiers. They could be easily crushed by a similar number of Nigerian troops, who are battle-hardened from their experience in Sierra Leone and Liberia, not to mention from regularly killing their own citizens. Someone suggested that Iraq and Kuwait was not an inappropriate analogy.

Fradique has taken on some formidable foes. One day when he was showing me around the headquarters of his cocoa business, he remarked, somewhat wistfully, "Last year, I was having a good time, making money, having girls and parties, and then the Trovoadas came to me and said would I like to be President, and here I am!" He seemed not to have anticipated what he was getting into.

"And now Adrian is going to do a couple of P.S.A.T. practice pages for us."

Miguel Trovoada, who left such a tangled web for Fradique, is an urbane, dark-skinned man with white hair. He is sixty-six, a year older than Pinto da Costa, São Tomé's first President. Both men belong to the tiny São Toméan middle class. They studied in Lisbon in the late fifties, when the city was a hotbed of young African revolutionaries plotting the liberation of their homelands. Trovoada studied law and led the first São Toméan independence movement. He was Pinto da Costa's prime minister until 1979, when he was sent to jail following allegations of a coup attempt. There were also allegations of theft of government money, and in 1981 Trovoada went into exile in Paris. He returned to São Tomé in 1990, formed his own party, and was elected President the next year. By this time, he had apparently shed his leftist inclinations, and he established diplomatic relations with Taiwan and initiated the first of a series of agreements aimed at developing São Tomé's oil wealth.

I saw Trovoada at a reception at Quinta da Favorita one night shortly after I arrived, and spoke to him later, just as he was preparing to return to his home in Paris. Why had he chosen Fradique as his successor? He laughed. "Well, there was this idea in the air that, after me, Pinto da Costa would return to power again, that it was just the two of us who took turns being President, but I thought that the next President should be someone who came from the economic sector. And there was Fradique. He was a businessman, and he also had political and diplomatic experience. This man, I thought, was capable. That was why I chose him." Trovoada chuckled again, and I asked him if he still felt that he had made the right decision. "I should say that each leader has his own temperament," he replied vaguely. "Obviously, we have different ways of exercising power." As for the oil contracts and agreements with Nigeria, "everything that was done was done within the law," Trovoada said. "Others might have done things in a different way. But I acted in good faith."

Miguel Trovoada's son, Patrice, a chubby, youthful-looking man of forty, came by to see me one morning at my hotel. He wore slacks and a tropical shirt and a gold ring studded with diamonds. Patrice, who is referred to behind his back as Baby Doc, divides his time between São Tomé, Paris, and Houston, where he owns a construction company. He converted to Islam a number of years ago. He boasts of his friendship with some of Africa's least savory dictators, including Qaddafi, and he knows that he is a notorious figure in São Tomé. "I am not well liked by the élites here," he said, "because I have quite a bit of money and because I made it on my own, outside of São Tomé."

MYSTERIOUS STRANGER WONDERS WHO HE, HIMSELF, IS.

We sat on a sofa in the lobby, and, as we began to talk, Patrice was interrupted by a call on his cell phone. He apologized and explained that it was his mother. "She would be furious if she knew I was out of bed. Yesterday I had a malaria attack." A couple of tall Nigerians wearing traditional clothing came by. One was the adviser to the foreign minister, and the other was a member of the joint Nigerian-São Toméan oil authority. The oil man told Patrice to come around for breakfast at the Nigerian Embassy. He called him Camarada Militante, and they both chuckled. He was flying back to Nigeria in a few hours, he said, and he wanted to talk to Rafael Branco about what had happened in a meeting with Fradique and the lawyers. He said this in an irritated fashion, and then left. Patrice turned back to me, and spoke about Fradique.

"The man is very strange. He has no wife"—his wife died ten years ago—"no children, no parents, no friends, and he is like a wild bull. He charges straight ahead. One thing is for sure: he doesn't like the Nigerians, and this can be very dangerous for São Tomé and Príncipe. The United States is not taking into account what kind of man they have as a partner here. The next few months are particularly crucial, and Fradique is going to disappoint a lot of people. He's a sweet talker, but he has no methodology. And I am responsible for this"—Patrice laughed. "I went and chose this man! We chose him so he could insure some vision we had, and so that I could return to the back office. I figured he'd take a year to make changes—new President, new rules, and all of that—but not the way he's done it!"

One evening, Fradique held a dinner to celebrate the anniversary of São Tomé's independence. Tables for about two hundred people were set in the front garden of the Presidential palace, an elegant pink-and-white mansion that once housed the colonial governors. It was lit up dramatically and looked like a big cake. Around noon the next day, in Independence Plaza, opposite the corniche, where a grandstand had been erected, a group of women were dancing, animated by free beer and Carnival-style music coming from speakers. Several men and boys had climbed into a breadfruit tree to get a better view. Amiable-looking soldiers wearing red berets and holding Kalashnikovs stood at attention when a security convoy drove up, followed by a cavalcade of cars led by two Mercedeses. One, which had a red license plate with the letters "PR," for "President of the Republic," was carrying Fradique and Teodoro Obiang, the dictator of Equatorial Guinea, a tall thin man in a dark suit. Omar Bongo, the dictator of Gabon, was

"O.K., Howard. What is it this time?"

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in the other Mercedes. Bongo is a tiny, natty man, very black, and he wore what looked like custom-made shoes with platform heels. His wife is a rather queenly woman, much younger than him and a head taller. She was wearing a great deal of gold jewelry, a gold-and-purple print dress, and gold-rimmed Gucci sunglasses. She ascended the grandstand and took her place next to her petite husband. Bongo has been in power since 1967, and has long enjoyed a close relationship with French oil companies. Obiang has held office since 1979, when he overthrew his uncle and had him executed. In the last few years, Exxon Mobil, Chevron-Texaco, and a host of smaller U.S. companies have secured lucrative deals with Obiang for a share of Equatorial Guinea's estimated billion and a half barrels of offshore oil. Both Bongo and Obiang are exceedingly corrupt and exceedingly wealthy.

Attentive security men from the three countries stood on the grandstand, and there were more of them near the official cars parked at either end of the plaza, suspiciously eying passing theatre groups and undulating women in batik sarongs. A soldier on the roof of a building at one corner of the plaza surveyed the scene with binoculars. Two Arabs in suits—Obiang's Moroccan security guards—stood at the back of the grandstand. Inebriated dancers and mimes swayed to the sounds of drums and flutes. A group of men were dressed up as women, some in headdresses and clothing decorated with mirrors and bits of gold. Several children jumped between sticks that men held on the ground and slammed together. Two men briefly and exuberantly simulated copulation in front of the grandstand—Mme. Bongo averted her gaze—and pranced off again.

Bongo and Obiang frowned stolidly at the spectacle, staring straight ahead through their dark sunglasses. Fradique, who was wearing a gray suit with a quaint bow tie, smiled and nodded, apparently delighted with the chaos. President Obasanjo of Nigeria was supposed to have been at the ceremony, but he didn't arrive in time. His jet flew into São Tomé that evening, and he went off to meet privately with Fradique.

Alfredo Gaspar, who manages Fradique's business interests in Portugal, where the President owns several restaurants and night clubs, took me for a drive to the north end of the island. We travelled on one of the old cut-stone roads that were built by forced labor under the Portuguese and are now mostly blanketed with a layer of tar. The road ran through dense forests of ceibas, papayas, coco palms, and mango trees. We drove into a run-down plantation that had once been, I could see, a miniature world all its own, with a great, fanciful overseer's house, a narrow-gauge railway, a dispensary, stores, and blocks of dismal workers' cottages. The people who lived there now looked as if they had very little to do, and they stared at us blankly as we drove around. Gaspar said that the plantation had been renamed the Augustinho Neto, after Angola's late revolutionary leader. It was where Fradique's father had lived and worked after emigrating to São Tomé from Portugal.

We drove on along the coast—past black volcanic beaches and shipwrecked trawlers, more plantations, and, occasionally, people walking barefoot or on bicycles—and soon reached the spot where historians say the first Portuguese landed, in either 1469 or 1470. It was marked by a small concrete cross on a plinth in a gravel turnaround. Two young black men carrying harpoons were standing there, and they sold Gaspar some freshly caught squid and eel, and a pair of prehistoric-looking mollusks with big protruding eyes. He paid almost nothing, but the fishermen were grateful, and they waved, smiling broadly, as we drove off.

The road that circles most of the island of São Tomé runs, literally, past people's front doors. They walk, talk, and play on its rumpled surface, scattering when a vehicle comes barrelling along, although that is not often, since almost nobody has a vehicle. Women and children carry water in jerricans and bunches of firewood on their heads; cacao cutters trudge slowly, carrying long hooked spears. Little boys run on the shoulders of the road, spinning rubber tires with sticks, or trailing toy trucks made of wood. When they see a foreigner, they jump with excitement and yell "*Branco!*" (white) and "*Doce!*" (candy). Pigs dart across the road and into the forest, foraging for food, and men, drunk on palm wine, teeter and sway. When a car goes by, everyone pauses to stare, and many wave; the old men often tip their hats with polite subservience. After dark, since there is almost no electricity outside the capital, people gather around the few houses or little stores lit with kerosene lamps, staring at the light.

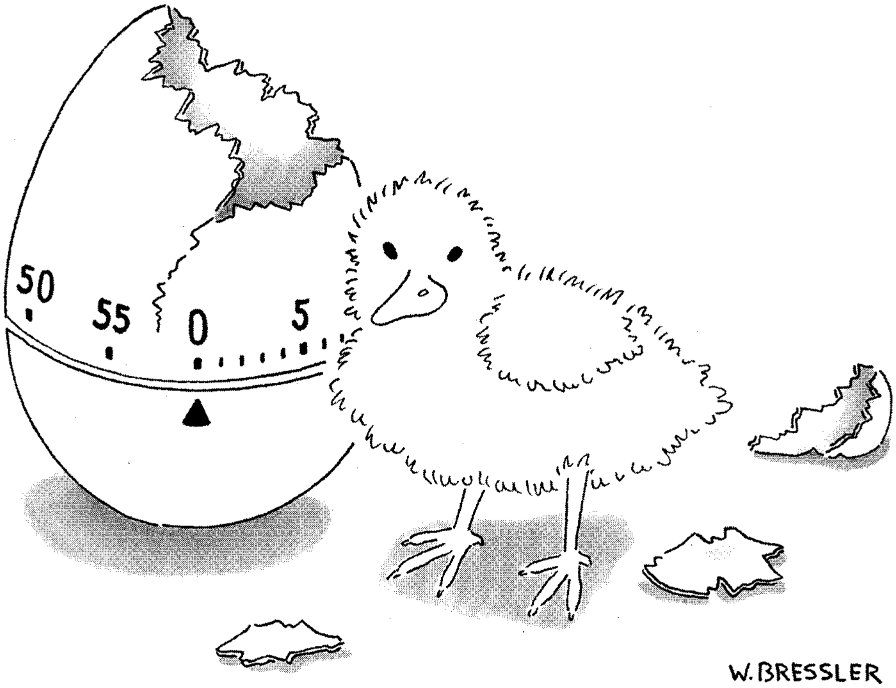
I was in Washington a few weeks after I left São Tomé, and I went to see Paul Michael Wihbey, one of the founders of the African Oil Policy Initiative Group, a spinoff of a symposium held in January by the Institute for Advanced Strategic and Political Studies, a Jerusalem-based think tank. The symposium had been organized to discuss alternatives to Arab oil supplies, and a few months afterward Wihbey's group published a white paper that included a recommendation that the Bush Administration declare the Gulf of Guinea an area of "vital interest" to the United States. It also encouraged the establishment on São Tomé of a "regional subcommand, similar to U.S. Forces Korea."

The white paper attracted a lot of attention from politicians and American oil companies. Wihbey had just been to Nigeria and had met with President Obasanjo and other officials. "Obasanjo was very receptive to the idea of a U.S. strategic role in the Gulf of Guinea," Wihbey said. "A mantra in our meetings was the idea that post-9/11, the Gulf of Guinea should replace the Persian Gulf. Obasanjo is interested in debt relief, and he hints at raising oil production in return. These states—Nigeria, São Tomé, Angola, and others—realize they have an opportunity for a new relationship with the United States. We made the point to Obasanjo that this opportunity will not last forever. He seems to understand this, and so does Fradique." Barry Schutz, a veteran Africa analyst and co-chairman of the African Oil Policy Initiative Group, added, "These countries don't pose the problems that the countries of the Middle East do. Of course, there are problems with their governments, but you have to be able to take the baby with the bathwater." Wihbey hopes that Bush will declare the Gulf of Guinea a region of strategic importance fairly soon. "Right now, the ball is in Washington's court, specifically the White House."

Fradique stayed in the United States for a week after his breakfast with President Bush. He went to Texas and to Washington, for meetings with oil executives, congressmen, the World Bank, the I.M.F., and White House and Pentagon officials. The high-level meetings were a sign of what Paul Michael Wihbey calls "a sea-change that is taking place in U.S. geopolitical strategy," which includes Bush's recently unveiled strike-first policy toward states like Iraq. "Even if the U.S. is successful in regime change in Iraq, all the signs are that the Persian Gulf will continue to be extremely volatile for many years to come," Wihbey said. "And there's a six-thousand-mile coastline along West Africa that is rich in oil and natural gas, with not a blue-water navy in the area. So the security of these oil-producing states needs to be guaranteed. A São Tomé and Príncipe home port for commercial vessels and warships is an absolute prerequisite for the development of the region."

On September 20th, E.R.H.C received a letter from Fradique saying that São Tomé would not accept the existing contract between them. "This is huge," Greg Craig said. "The Nigerians can now decide whether they want to negotiate or litigate. It would be a huge plus for human decency if they decide to negotiate. But President Fradique has said that he'll do either." Wihbey was less sanguine on this issue. "The conflict cannot be allowed to reach the point where it causes a breakdown in diplomacy," he said. "That would have a very deleterious effect on oil companies and other investors. The U.S. has a strong interest in making sure this is resolved amicably, as soon as possible." E.R.H.C. announced that it was sticking by the contract.

Fradique flew from Washington to Lisbon and was resting there before going on to São Tomé. He was feeling a little sick, he told me on the phone, and thought he might be coming down with malaria: "When you're from São Tomé, you know, it's in your blood." He was thrilled with his trip to America. He had discussed the idea of a U.S. naval home port on São Tomé with Jendayi Frazer, Condoleezza Rice's deputy for Africa, with Senator Kennedy and Walter Kansteiner, the Assistant Secretary of State for Africa, and with a senior Pentagon adviser. Kansteiner was going to visit São Tomé in mid-October. "In all my meetings, I explained about São Tomé and how we are a very small country and need protection, because we will soon be producing oil and have so much money, and will be very . . . how shall I say—*attractive*—to outsiders. I said that we welcome any installation the United States wants to put in São Tomé." He had also felt out some of his fellow African leaders about the prospect of São Tomé hosting an American military base. They were coming around. "You know, just a little while ago nobody even knew about São Tomé," Fradique said, "and so this creates some jealousy. In the end, this is something that all of these people would like for *themselves*." ♦



W. BRESSLER

FICTION

DRUMMOND & SON

BY CHARLES D'AMBROSIO

Drummond opened the shop every morning at seven so he and his boy could eat breakfast while the first drop-offs were coming in. The boy liked cereal and sat at the workbench in back, slurping his milk, while Drummond occasionally hustled out to the curb to help a secretary haul a cumbersome I.B.M. from the back seat of a car. The front of the store was a showroom for refurbished machines, displayed on shelves, each with a fresh sheet of white bond rolled into the platen, while the back was a chaos of wrecked typewriters Drummond would either salvage or cannibalize for parts someday. There were two stools and two lamps at the workbench for the rare times when the son felt like joining his father, cleaning keys, but generally after breakfast the boy spent the rest of the day sitting behind Drummond in an old Naugahyde recliner, laughing to himself and saying prayers, or wandering out to the sidewalk to smoke a cigarette. That he step outside to smoke was the only major request Drummond ever made of his son. "Next week's your birthday," Drummond said.

"Next week." The boy finished his cereal, plunking the spoon against the empty bowl. He said, "I think I'll go outside."

"How about rinsing your bowl?"

"Oh, yeah."

"It's raining pretty hard out."

"That's O.K.," Pete said, grabbing a

broken umbrella he'd found in the street, a batty contraption of bent spokes and torn black fabric.

A clear-plastic curtain separated the two parts of the store, and Drummond kept a careful eye on his son from the bench. Drummond had acquired sole ownership of the business after his father died of emphysema, and he still remembered those last months beside him on the bench, the faint whisper as the plastic tube fed the old man oxygen. He knew the tank was pumping air through his dad's nose and into his lungs, but day after day it sounded as though the life were leaking out of him. The elder Drummond had just cleaned his glasses with a purple shop rag and nudged them back on the bridge of his nose when he died, and it was as if, for a lingering moment, he were looking over the workbench, among a lifetime's clutter of keys and type bars, dental tools and unravelling ribbons, for his last breath.

Shortly after his dad died, Drummond had started bringing Pete to the shop, and he sometimes guessed that his wife, free of the boy for the first time in years, had discovered she liked living without the burden. She had hinted as much in a letter he recently received, postmarked from her new address in Portland, suggesting that he meet with a social worker to discuss "the future." He missed his wife tremendously when he opened the envelope and saw the beautiful loops of blue cursive running across the page. He hadn't written back yet, because he wasn't sure what to say to this woman whose absence rendered his life so strange. They had eloped during his senior year at West Seattle High, and this would have been their silver anniversary. Without her he felt lonely, but he wasn't angry, and he wondered if their marriage, after twenty-five years, had simply run its course.

The sheets of white paper in the twenty or so typewriters on display waved in unison when Pete opened the door after smoking his cigarette.

"Now is the time, now is the time, now is the time," the boy said, sweeping along the shelf and inspecting the sheets.

"You want to do some keys?" Drummond asked.

"Not now," Pete said, sitting in his brown recliner.

Drummond wore a blue smock and leaned under a bright fluorescent lamp like a jeweller or a dentist, dipping a Q-Tip in solvent and dabbing inked dust off the type heads of an Olivetti Lettera 32. The machine belonged to a writer, a young man, about Pete's age, who worked next door, at La Bas Books, and was struggling to finish his first novel. The machine was a mess. Divots pocked the platen, and the keys had a cranky, uneven touch, so that they punched through the paper or, on the really recalcitrant letters, the "A" or "Q," stuck midway and swung impotently at the empty air. Using so much muscle made a crescent moon of every comma, a pinprick of every period. Drummond offered to sell the young man an identical Olivetti, pristine, with case and original instruction manual, but was refused. Like a lot of writers, as Drummond had discovered, the kid believed a resident genie was housed inside his machine. He had to have this one. "Just not so totally fucked up," he'd said.

Hardly anybody used typewriters these days, but, with the epochal change in clientele brought on by computers, Drummond's business shifted in small ways and remained profitably intact. He had a steady stream of customers, some loyally held over from the old days, some new. Drummond was a good mechanic, and word spread among an emerging breed of hobbyist. Collectors came to him from around the city, mostly men, often retired, fussy and strange, a little contrary, who liked the smell of solvents and enjoyed talking shop and seemed to believe an unwritten life was stubbornly buried away in the dusty machines they brought in for restoration. His business had become more sociable as a growing tribe of holdouts banded together. He now kept a coffee urn and a stack of Styrofoam cups next to the register, for customers who liked to hang out. There were pockets of people who warily refused the future, or the promise or whatever it was computers were offering, and stuck by their typewriters. Some of them were secretaries who filled out forms, and others were writers, a sudden surge of them from all over Seattle. There were professors and poets and young women with colored hair who wrote for the local weeklies. There were aging lefties who made carbons of their correspondence or owned mimeographs and hand-cranked the ink drums and dittoed urgent newsletters that smelled of freshly laundered cotton for their dwindling coteries. Now and then, too, customers walked in off the street, a stream of curious shoppers who simply wanted to touch the machines, tapping the keys and slapping back the carriage when the bell rang out, leaving a couple of sentences behind.

Drummond tore down the old Olivetti. While he worked, he could hear his son laughing to himself.

"What's so funny?" Drummond asked.

"Nothing," the boy said.

"You always say 'nothing,' " Drummond said, "but you keep on laughing. I'd sure like to know for once what you find so funny all the time."

The boy's face hadn't been moved by a real smile in years, and he never cried. He had been quite close to Drummond's father—who doted on his only grandchild—but the boy's reaction at the funeral was unreadable: blanker and less emotional than a stranger's would have been, who at least might have reflected selfishly on his own death, or the death of friends, or death generally, digging up some connection. On the short drive there, Pete had sat slumped in his seat, staring out at the rain-swept, gray city, laughing.

"What are you laughing at?" Drummond had asked.

"Nothing."

Drummond pressed the boy. On such a momentous day, the laughing had got to him.

"Tell me," he'd said impatiently.

"I just start to laugh when I see something sad," Pete had said.

"You think it's funny?"

"I don't think I find it funny. But I laugh anyway."

"Some of these are crooked as hell," Drummond said now, gently twisting the "T" with a pair of needle-nose pliers. "They'll never seat right in the guides, even if I could straighten them out. You see that?" He turned in his stool and showed the boy the bent type bar, just as his father had shown him ages ago. "Not with the precision you want, anyway. A good typewriter needs to work like a watch."

The boy couldn't carry his end of a conversation, not even with nods of feigned interest. His moods were a kind of unsettled weather, either wind-whipped

ROBERT & SHANA PARKEHARRISON "EARTH ELEGIES" (1999)/ BONNI BENRUBI GALLERY

and stormy with crazy words or becalmed by an overcasting silence. His face, blunt and drawn inward, was now and then seized by spasms, and his body, boggy and soft, was racked by jerky, purposeless movements. He wore slipshod saddle shoes that had flattened and grown wide at the toes like a clown's, collapsing under his monotonous tread. His button-down blue oxford shirt and his khakis were neatly pressed; Drummond ironed them every morning on a board built into a cupboard in the kitchen. He spritzed them as he'd seen his wife do, putting an orderly crease in slacks that were otherwise so deeply soiled with a greasy sheen that he was never able to wash the stain out.

"I think I'll go outside," Pete said.

"You sure smoke a lot," Drummond told him.

"Am I smiling?"

He wasn't, but Drummond smiled and said that he was.

"I feel like I am inside," Pete said.

It was a gray Seattle day. There was a bus stop in front of the shop, and often the people who came in and browsed among the typewriters were just trying to escape the cold. A big, boxy heater with louvred vents hung from the ceiling on threaded pipe, warmly humming, and wet kids would gather in the right spot, huddled with upturned faces under the canted currents of streaming heat. Drummond let them be. He found the familiar moods and rhythms satisfying, the tapping keys enclosed in the larger tapping of the rain. Almost everyone who entered the shop left at least a word behind—their name, some scat, a quote. Even kids who typed a line of gobbledygook managed to communicate their hunger or hurt by an anemic touch or an angry jab. The sullen strokes of a stiffly pointing finger, the frustrated, hammering fist, the tentative, tinkering notes that opened to a torrent as the feel of the machine returned to the hand—all of it was like a single line of type, a continuous sentence. As far back as Drummond could recall, he'd had typewriter parts in his pockets and ink in the crevices of his fingers and a light sheen of Remington gun oil on his skin. His own stained hands were really just a replica of his father's, a version of the original he could still see, smeared violet from handling silk ribbons, the blunt blue-black nails squeezing soft white bread as the first team of Drummond & Son, taking a lunch break, ate their bologna-and-sweet-pickle sandwiches on Saturday afternoons.

A rosary of maroon beads dangled between the boy's legs, faintly ticking, as he rocked in his recliner. A silent prayer moved his lips.

"Jesus Christ was brain-dead," Pete said. "That's what I've been thinking lately."

Drummond turned on his stool. "Sometimes your illness tells you things, Pete. You know that." The smutted skin on the boy's hands was cracked and bleeding. "You need some lotion," Drummond said. Dead flakes sloughed to the floor, and a snow of scurf whitened the boy's lap. "You like that Vaseline, don't you?"

The boy didn't answer.

"You know I worry," Drummond said. "Especially when I talk about God."

"Yeah, especially."

"You believe."

"I do," Drummond said, although of late he wasn't sure that was true. "But that's different."

"There's only one true God," the boy said.

"I know."

"I was thinking of writing a symphony to prove it."

"You want some classical?" Drummond asked, reaching for the radio knob.

"Don't," Pete said.

"O.K., O.K."

"I'd show how many ways, how many ideas all lead to one idea. God. I'd get the main structure, and jam around it. The whole thing could be a jam."

Drummond futzed with the novelist's machine while he listened to the boy. The old platen's rubber, cracked and hard as concrete, was partially responsible for chewing up the paper and shredding the ribbons. Pressing his thumbnail into a new one, Drummond found that it was properly soft and pliant, in near-mint condition, and he began pulling out the old platen. Drummond had been one of those kids who, after taking apart an old clock or a radio, actually put it back together again, and his satisfaction at the end of any job still drew on the pleasure of that original competence.

"I'd rather record on a computer," the boy continued. "Instead of a static piece of stuff, like an album, you go right to the people, right into their brain. You can do that with a computer."

"You remember about your visitor?"

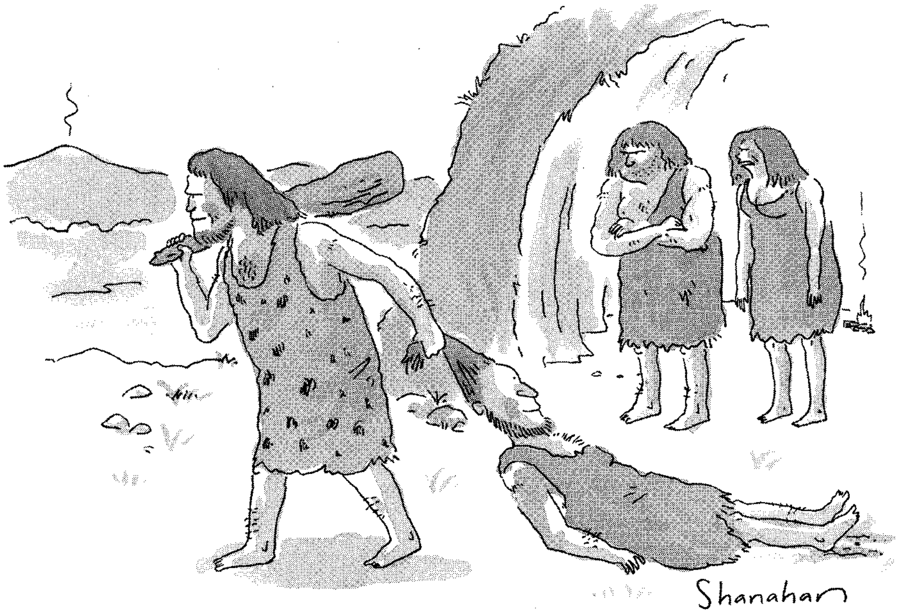
"Yeah."

"Today is going to be a little different," Drummond said. "We're not going to Dunkin' Donuts right away."

"I like the Dunkin' Donuts," Pete said.

"I know you do." Drummond took a deep breath and said firmly, "Today we're doing things just a little different from normal. You're having a visitor."

"Who?"



"Can't you just be happy for them?"

"She's a nice lady, and she wants to ask you some questions."

"I think I'd like to become a baker."

"What happened to being a janitor?"

"Maybe a janitor at a bakery."

"Now you're thinking." Drummond turned on his stool and looked his son in the eye. "Remember how Mom used to bake bread?"

"No," said the boy.

"No?" Drummond absently cleaned ink from a fingernail with the blade of a screwdriver. "Of course you do. She'd put a damp towel over the bowl, and you'd sing to her. She used to tell you that it was your singing that made the dough rise, remember?"

Drummond turned back to his workbench and listened to the rain, and to the boy praying and telling the beads. The wall in front of his bench was covered with pinups of writers posed beside their typewriters. Drummond wasn't particularly well read, but he knew a lot about literature through the machines that made it. This knowledge was handy in selling a Royal Quiet De Luxe to an aspiring writer whose hero was Hemingway, or a Hermes Baby Rocket to a Steinbeck fan. A curiosity he'd never been able to figure out was that many of these writers didn't really know how to type. They hung like vultures over their machines, clawing at the keyboards with two fingers and sometimes a thumb, and while they were often hugely prolific, they went about it desperately, hunting and pecking, as though scratching sentences out of the dirt. Given their technique, it was a miracle some of them managed to say anything. An editorialist for the Seattle *Times* told Drummond that he just sat there and hit the machine until, letter by letter, it coughed up the words he wanted. Even Michener, a man Drummond had read and esteemed highly, in part for having typed more than anyone on earth, except perhaps a few unsung women from the bygone era of the secretarial pool, was a clod at the keys.

"You had a really good voice," Drummond said.

At twenty-minute intervals, the sidewalk filled and then emptied, the shop window blooming with successive crops of black umbrellas as buses came and went. The hour for the appointment with the social worker approached, and Drummond found that he could no longer concentrate. He rolled two sheets of paper into the novelist's Olivetti, typing the date and a salutation to his wife, then sat with his elbows on the workbench, staring. He wondered if he should drop "Dear" and go simply with "Theresa," keeping things businesslike, a touch cold. Whenever Drummond opened a machine, he saw a life in the amphitheatre of seated type bars, just as a dentist, peering into a mouth for the first time, probably understood something about the person, his age and habits and vices. Letters were gnawed and ground down like teeth, gunked up with ink and the plaque of gum erasers, stained with everything from coffee to nicotine and lipstick, but none of his knowledge helped him now. Drummond wanted to type a letter and update his wife, but the mechanic in him felt as though the soul of what he had to say just wasn't in the machine. He looked at the greeting again and noticed that the capital "T" in his wife's name was faintly blurred. That sometimes happened when the type bar struck the guide and slipped sideways at impact, indicating a slight misalignment.

Drummond had been expecting a rendition of his wife, but the woman who walked in the door shortly after noon was nothing like Theresa. She couldn't have been much older than Pete, and she wore faded jeans and a soft, sloppy V-neck sweater with the sleeves casually bunched up on her elbows. Her hair was long, and her eyes were gray, and her nose, though small, was bulbous. Drummond offered her a stool at the back of the shop and brought her a cup of coffee.

"So, Peter, I'm from Keystone," she said. "A halfway house in Fremont."

Pete squirmed in his recliner, rubbing his hands over the thighs of his soiled khakis.

"Nothing's been decided," Drummond assured the boy.

"Do you have many friends?" the social worker asked.

"No," Pete said.

"No one you see on a regular basis?"

The boy reached for the crumpled pack of cigarettes in his shirt pocket and then picked up his rosary beads instead. The long chain trembled in his trembling hands, and his mouth made

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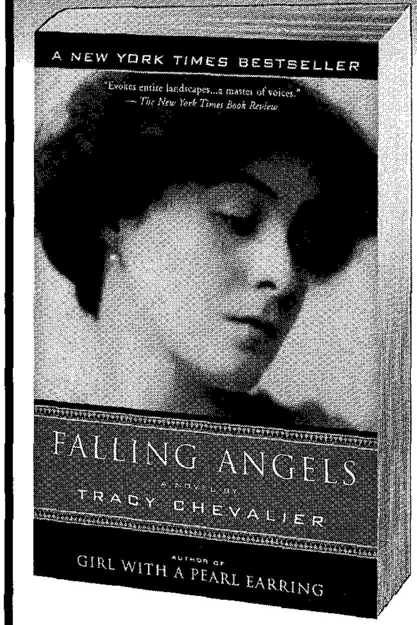
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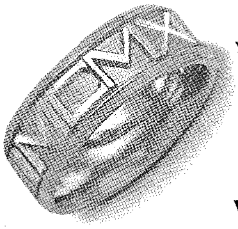
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smacking noises, as though he were slopping down soup.

"When I talked to your father, he said you were in a day program several years ago. Did you enjoy that?"

"It was O.K."

"Why did you stop going?"

"I think I'll go outside."

"No," Drummond said. "Stay here and talk to the lady. She only has a few questions, and then we're done."

The copper cowbell above the shop door clattered, and the sheets of paper in the typewriters waved and rustled, giving off the slight, dry whisper of skittering leaves. Drummond half listened to the tapping keys and the ringing bells and the ratchet of the returning carriage until the cowbell clanged dully a second time as the customer left. In the ensuing quiet, the sound of his boy working the polished rosary beads between his rough, scaly fingers distracted Drummond from the social worker's questions. The cowbell clapped a third time. A young mother was trying to ease a tandem carriage across the threshold without waking her twin babies. Drummond excused himself and went to help lift the front axle over the bump.

"My husband would love that," the woman said. Mindful of her babies, she spoke in a soft voice. "What is it?"

"That's a Remington Streamliner," Drummond said.

"Do you mind if I give it a try?"

"No, go right ahead."

He set the machine on a desk and held a chair for the woman. Perhaps the new world of computers had taught people timidity, schooling them in the possibility or threat of losing a thing irrevocably with the slightest touch. This woman's hand pressed the "H" so tentatively that the type bar fell back with an exhausted plop before it reached the paper.

"Go ahead," Drummond said. "Give it a good, clean stroke. You won't hurt it. With a manual typewriter you want a little bounce. You can put your shoulders into it."

"Now is the time for all good men now is the time," the woman typed on the black lacquered machine, and when the bell rang out, happily ratifying what she'd written, she squealed and clapped her hands.

"This is the most beautiful typewriter I've ever seen," she said. "It's so—so noir! It's got Hollywood written all over it."

"It's prewar," Drummond said. "The Second World War, I mean. What's your husband do?"

"He's a lawyer," the woman said. "But he's got that midlife thing going on and wants to try his hand at screenplays. He's got lots of stories from his days as a public defender. His birthday's coming up, and I just know he's going to be depressed."

"Hold on," Drummond said, walking back to his workbench. He pulled a photo off the wall.

"If your mind's too great for you," Pete was saying, "you should just let God take it. That's what Christ did. He was brain-dead. He never thought on his own."

"I've never heard that before," the social worker said.

Drummond took the photograph and, somewhat chagrined at the wacky course the interview was taking, returned to the showroom. "That's Raymond Chandler," he said. Chandler wore large owlish glasses and sat with a pipe clenched between his teeth, in a bungalow on the Paramount lot. A sleek, gleaming Streamliner rested on his desk.

The woman ran a slender hand lovingly over the polished casing, as though it were the hood of a car. Drummond told her the price, expecting her to balk, but instead she gave the machine a pat, ticking her wedding band against the metal, and then brought out a checkbook, and paid for the machine, also purchasing extra ribbons, a bottle of White-Out, and a foam pad. "It's just too perfect," she said. The typewriter was added, like a third sleeping baby, to the carriage. Drummond helped the woman over the threshold again and watched her go. All the young mothers these days were so lovely in a casual, offhand way. Drummond still dressed like his father, who had always worn a shirt and tie under his smock, as though his job were on a par, in dignity and importance, with the work of a doctor.

Drummond returned to his son and the social worker.

"If I let God take my brain, I'd be laughing. I'd know where I was going."

The woman wrote something on a

"There's nothing like ballpark sushi."

clipboard, which was beginning to crawl with tiny, antlike words.

"Where would you be going?" she asked.

"I'd be going down."

"Down?"

"I'm trying to figure my brain. What it wants me to do. I think to go down, but I can't figure out what it's good for. It's too much for me."

Pete's lips smacked grotesquely, and he stood up. "I think I just want to be a son," he said. "Not a god." His elbow jerked involuntarily. "I have to go to the bathroom."

The boy vanished into the back of the shop. Drummond turned to the social worker, whose long straight hair framed a lovely, plain face.

"Is that typical?" she asked. "That kind of talk?"

Drummond sat on his stool. "Yeah," he said.

"And the dyskinesia?"

Drummond nodded—tardive dyskinesia. Half the words he needed to describe his son he couldn't spell, and all of them sounded as fantastic and as far away as the Mesozoic monsters he had loved so much as a child. He remembered paging through "The Big Golden Book of Dinosaurs." The illustrations were lurid, and the narrative encompassed the soupy advent and sad passing of an entire world. Now his boy was the incredible creature, and Drummond's vocabulary had become lumbering and dinosauric, plodding with polysyllables.

When the boy returned, he announced that he'd looked in the bathroom mirror and couldn't see any love in his eyes. Without saying goodbye to the social worker, he picked up his broken umbrella, tapping the chrome spike across the carpeted floor on his way outside to smoke.

"Are you a believer?" Drummond asked.

"No," the young woman said.

"He suffers," Drummond said. "The suffering—"

The woman nodded. Drummond told her how the boy saw faces disintegrate before his eyes; the faces fell to pieces, then disappeared, leaving a hole. He told her how, in the early days of the illness, they'd taken the beloved family dog to the pound because it was talking to Pete and could read his mind and Pete was afraid the dog would tear him apart. Last week it was the shop radio, an old Philco that had been his father's—they couldn't listen anymore. When the announcers laughed, Pete thought they were laughing at him. They would say exactly what he was thinking, predicting his thoughts. Last week the boy was so afraid that he'd only walk backward in public, convinced that someone was following him. He stumbled in reverse up the steps of the bus, and walked backward down the aisle.

Drummond said, "It's Friday, so, what—Wednesday night, I guess, he smelled burning flesh in the house. I always check on him before I go to bed, just to make sure he's O.K." He sighed. "When I went in that night, he had raw eggs all around his bed. So I thought it was time to call you."

"You said your wife is gone?"

"I think so," Drummond said. Even though he knew the interview was over, he let the matter drift because he was uncomfortable with sympathy. "If anything happened to me," he said, "I don't know—"

"That's got to have you worried," the woman said. She was very professional and understanding, and Drummond realized how little conversation he'd had since his wife left. The interview, though, was a botch. When the social worker mentioned a waiting list, halfheartedly, Drummond saw that his growing need for help was exactly the thing that disqualified him from getting help from this woman.

"These things don't really bother me," he said feebly. "Because—because I understand him, you see."

Drummond taped a sign on the door and locked the shop. He and the boy walked to the drugstore in the rain. Pete twirled his ragged, useless umbrella over their heads.

"I decided against a halfway house," Drummond said.

"You have to forsake me," the boy said. "I see that eventually happening."

"You don't see, not if that's what you think."

"Maybe I just see better. I'm like a prophet. And you're sort of unevolved."

"O.K.," Drummond said. "All right, maybe. I'm unevolved. Sure."

They picked up a bottle of hand lotion, and Pete tried on a pair of glasses. The gold-rimmed frames sat cockeyed on his nose, and the left lens was stamped with the manufacturer's name: Opti-Vision. Pete looked longingly at himself in the mirror, blinking his green eyes. Drummond wasn't sure whether to dissuade him; from a distance the boy, bespectacled, looked oddly more balanced, his elusive, deranged face suddenly pulled into focus.

"You don't really need glasses," Drummond said.

"I do."

"Your eyes were fine last time we had them checked."

Pete said he wanted these glasses, these, with the gold frames, so that people would see the love. In the end, it was only another of the seemingly endless list of lunatic errands Drummond had grown accustomed to, and he gave up, and paid for the glasses. They stepped next door and bought their usual lunch of doughnuts, of crullers and old-fashioneds, from the Greek. Drummond was still wary of the Greek, since the day, several months ago, when he'd asked Pete, rather loudly and obviously playing to an audience, if he wanted the psycho special. Drummond had been standing right beside Pete, but the Greek hadn't realized they were together. Pete's illness chipped away at the family resemblance, and people often took them for strangers. The Greek had apologized, and Pete had forgotten the incident—if, indeed, he'd ever noticed it—but the day lingered in Drummond's mind, a slight defensive hitch, every time he walked through the door of Dunkin' Donuts.

"I love Seattle," Pete said, as they started back to the shop. He held the tattered umbrella in one hand and the white sack of doughnuts in the other. "I think Seattle's one of the most happening places on the face of the globe at this point in time. I've never met so many movie stars—this is where it's at. Literally, one of the hot spots of the nation is Seattle, U.S.A." He looked at his father through the rain-beaded, fogged lenses of his new glasses, which hung askew on the tip of his nose. "Just the other day, I ran into John Denver in the street. I said, 'Oh, John, I'm writing an album and mailing it to you. It's called "Donuts." ' "

Drummond let the conversation blow away in the rain. He hooked his arm through his son's and hurried him on, but Pete shrugged him off. People glanced sideways at the two men as they made their strange way down Second Avenue. The boy's umbrella was a blasted tangle of snapping fabric and flailing spokes. Drummond's smock flew out behind him. He lowered his head against the wind and the rain and the faces. His fondest boyhood memories were of walking down this same street with his father, strolling and waving, as if the elder Drummond were the mayor of the avenue. Now his father was dead and he was the father, and this was his son.

"Buying me a new pair of shoes would go a long way toward making this world a less dangerous place."

"I love finding stuff in the street. Like this umbrella . . ." The boy lurched along, planting each foot directly in front of the other. "I went to a sculpture show. That's what the umbrella's all about. It didn't occur to me until I was walking up the street and it broke. I knew it was going to break, but I didn't know what I would do with it after. Then I thought, A sculpture. Of course. A sculpture. What else? I call it 'Salvador.' After Salvador Allende, the city Salvador, and Salvador Dalí. It's a triumvirate piece of sculpture. Covering all three bases."

About a block from the shop, as they were crossing Bell Street, the boy knelt down in the intersection. He took up a storybook prayer posture, bent on both knees, his hands folded together in the shape of a candle flame and his head solemnly bowed with his lips touching the tips of his fingers. The sack of doughnuts split open in the rain, and the umbrella skittered away in the wind. People paused to look down at the odd penitent praying in the crosswalk. Drummond saw a shiny patch on the asphalt turn from red to green, and then a few cars drove around, slowly. On either side of the crosswalk, a waiting crowd of pedestrians jostled one another at the curb for a view, and Drummond had a familiar, passing urge to explain. It seemed the boy would never get up, but then suddenly he made the sign of the cross, rose, and resumed walking, contemplatively, toward the shop.

They had not made much progress when the boy again fell to the sidewalk, again crossing himself and praying, the whole thing repeated like a liturgical rite, as if the boy were kneeling for the Stations. A moment of prayer, the stream of people parting, the stares so blank they seemed to Drummond like pity or hatred. Then the boy rose and picked his way cautiously along a fixed, narrow path and then dropped again to the sidewalk, like a supplicant. Drummond knelt down with his son, and implored him to get up. The boy's glasses were gone, and his thin, oily hair was pasted flat on his scalp. Drummond's long smock, saturated, clung darkly to his back. Pete rose again and put his foot down on a seam in the concrete and followed the cracked path and again began praying. Women in the beauty salon next to the shop watched at the window as Drummond knelt beside his son in the rain. He tried to hoist him up by his armpits, but the boy was a heavy deadweight. He lugged him across the sidewalk, heaving him a few feet at a time, until they made it safely to the shop door.

Inside, Drummond snipped the twine on a new bundle of shop rags and began drying the boy off. He wiped his hair and ran the rag down his neck. He unbuttoned his shirt and towelled off his arms and chest, surprised, as always, to see the boy so hirsute. Drummond used to bathe him as an infant in the kitchen sink. He remembered the yellow curtains Theresa had sewn, and the steamed window and the sill with the glossy green leaves of potted ivy. Drummond tried to bring back the feeling of those early winter twilights at the sink, he and the boy reflected in the window. He piled the wet rags, one after another, on the workbench, and when the boy was dry he said, "We're going to close up."

Pete nodded.

"Today's not working out," Drummond said. "Some days don't."

"My glasses," the boy said.

"O.K.," Drummond said. "O.K." He sat the boy in the recliner and went out to the sidewalk. Someone had stepped on the glasses. Drummond stared, mystified, at the empty gold frames glinting in the rain. The lenses had popped out. Back at his workbench, he tweaked the bridge of the glasses until it returned to its symmetrical curve and then he gently pressured the right earpiece down so that it was again parallel with the left. He ran a bead of glue around the frames and inserted the lenses, wiping them clean with a cloth diaper. "That'll do you," he said, handing them to Pete. Drummond pulled out a pocket comb and neatly parted the boy's thinning hair and swept it back from his face. When the boy looked up at his father, faint stars of fluorescent light reflected off the glasses.

"Do your job now," he said.

"I think I'll go outside," the boy said.

"Please," Drummond said under his breath. "Do your job first."

Pete began pulling the old paper from the typewriters. He stacked the sheets in a pile, squaring the edges with a couple of sharp taps against the counter. Then he fed blank sheets of paper into the platens, returned the carriages, and hit the tab buttons for the proper indentations, ready for a new paragraph, ready for the next day.

Drummond was nearly done with the Olivetti. He found the nameplate he needed—"Olivetti Lettera 32"—and glued it in place. He squeezed a daub of car wax on the cloth diaper and wiped down the case, drawing lustre out of the old enamel. He called the bookstore and told the kid that he was closing shop but his typewriter was ready.

While Drummond waited, he straightened up his workbench. The blank letter to his wife lay there. He crumpled the empty sheet and tossed it into the wastebasket.

When the kid came over, he could hardly believe it was the same machine. He typed the words everyone typed: "now is the time for all good men to come to the aid of their—"

"Is it 'country' or 'party'?" he asked.

"I see it both ways," Drummond said.

He wrote up a sales slip while the kid tapped the keys a couple of times more and looked down doubtfully at the machine. There was something off in its rightness and precision, an old and familiar antagonism gone, a testiness his fingers wanted to feel. He missed the adversity of typing across a platen pitted like a minefield, the resistance of the querulous keys that would bunch and clog. Drummond had seen this before. The kid wasn't ready to say it yet, but half of him wanted the jalopy touch of his broken Olivetti back.

"It's different," he said.

"What's the plot of your novel?" Drummond said.

"It's hard to explain," the kid said.

"Well, is it sci-fi?" he asked. "Romance? Detective thriller?"

Somewhat snobbily, the kid said, "It doesn't really fit any of those categories."

Drummond said, "Take the machine back and monkey with it. See how it feels. Give yourself some time to get used to it."

"I don't know," the kid said.

"Look," Drummond said. "I kept all the old parts. I could restore it back to broken in ten minutes. Or if you don't like the way it works just throw it on the floor

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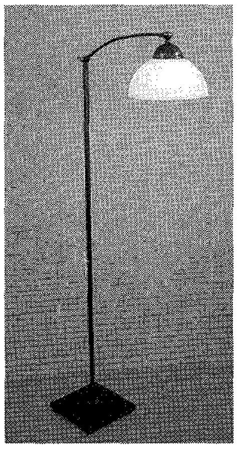

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a few times. But first give it a fair chance.”

He pushed the handwritten bill across the counter.

“Can I pay you tomorrow? It's been a slow day.”

“Sure,” Drummond said. “Tomorrow.”

Drummond and the boy boarded the bus and took their usual seats on the bench in back. Drummond wore an old snap-brim hat with a red feather in the band and a beige overcoat belted at the waist. He pulled a packet of salted nuts from the pocket, sharing them with the boy as the bus made its way slowly through the rush hour. His wife had taken their old green Fiat wagon, and Drummond sometimes wondered if he was supposed to feel foolish, letting her keep it. But he didn't really mind riding the bus, and during the past few months he and the boy had settled into a routine. They ate a snack and read what people had written during the day, and then, crossing the West Seattle bridge, the boy would time the trip home, praying and telling the decades of his rosary.

“You want some?” Drummond asked, holding out the small red box of raisins the boy liked. The boy shook his head indifferently, and Drummond slipped the box back into his pocket.

The boy pulled out of his pockets the sheets of paper he'd taken from the typewriters. For the most part the sentences were nonsensical, the random crashing of keys, or the repetitive phrases people remembered from typing classes. But some were more interesting, when people typed tantalizing bits of autobiography or quoted a passage of meaningful philosophy.

The boy slumped against the window and shuffled through the fluttering sheets, while Drummond, looking over his shoulder, followed along.

“Now is the time for all good men.”

“The quick brown fox jumped over.”

“God is Dead.”

“zrtiENsoina;ldu?/ng;'a!”

“Tony chief Tony Tony.”

“Now is the time now.”

“Jaclyn was here.”

“???????????!!!!!!”

“That interview didn't work out so great,” Drummond said. The bus rose, crossing over the Duwamish River. A ferry on the sound, its windows as bright as ingots of gold, seemed to be carting a load of light out of the city, making for the dark headlands of Bainbridge Island. Drummond wondered if the boy would like a boat ride tomorrow, or maybe even to go fishing. His father had kept his tackle as meticulously as he had kept his typewriters, and it was still stored with his cane rod in the hall closet. After a trip to Westport or a day on the sound, his father had sharpened his barbs with a hand file and dried and waxed the spoons and aught-six treble hooks until they shone as brightly as silverware. Nobody Drummond had ever known did that. Even now, a year after the old man's death, his gear showed no sign of rusting.

Drummond opened the bottle of lotion and squeezed a dollop into his palm. The lotion was cold, and he massaged it between his hands until it warmed to the touch.

“Give me your hand,” he said to the boy.

He rubbed the boy's hands, smoothing the dry, dead skin between his fingers, feeling the flaking scales soften between his own hands.

“Your birthday's Monday,” Drummond said.

Pete laughed.

“Any idea what you'd like?”

“No,” the boy said.

Theresa would probably call home on Pete's birthday. She'd always been good that way, calling or writing nice thank-you notes to people. For months Drummond had expected his wife to have a realization, although he was never sure what she'd realize. When they had eloped during his senior year—her sophomore—she was six months pregnant and beginning to show. She had never had a real honeymoon or even, she had told him bitterly, a real life. The boy had been a tremendous, bewildering amount of work for a girl of sixteen. Drummond supposed that at forty-one she was still a young woman. Now that she was gone, he found most of his social life at church. He was in charge of the coffee urn, and picked up pastries from a bakery on California Avenue whose owner was an old crony of his father's. He enjoyed the hour of fellowship after Mass, mingling with people he'd known all his life, people in whose aging faces he still recognized the shortstop from Catholic Youth ball or the remnant of a former May Day queen's smile. There was one particular lady he thought he might consider asking out on a possible date when the time was right.

The rain falling against the roof of the bus and the warm amber light inside were familiar. Drummond capped the lotion and put the bottle away. He checked his watch. He wanted to stop by the corner store before it closed; he needed to pick up a frozen pizza and some pop and ice cream for dinner. As the bus wound around Alki Point, he looked again at his watch, a Hamilton pocket model, railroad grade, which he wore on a silver fob slipped through his belt. Resting in his palm, it had that satisfying heft well-made things often have, the weight falling just right. It had been his father's, and before that had belonged to his grandfather, an engineer for the old Great Northern. They'd never had to change the initials on the case, and the center wheel traveled four thousand miles, round and round, in the course of a year. His grandfather had told him that and now Drummond often saw the image of the elderly frail man as he wound the stem in the morning.

“Tomorrow's Saturday,” he said. “I've got some catching up to do.

“But Monday,” he said, “I'll take the day off. How'd you like that? We'll do something, just me and you.

“You'll be twenty-five years old.

“Twenty-five years,” he said.

Almost by way of acknowledgment, the boy nudged his glasses up the bridge of his nose. Drummond took off his old snap-brim hat and fitted it on the boy's head. His face, reflected in the yellow glass, had already faded into its cryptic and strange cloister. His heavy purple lips were shaping the words to a prayer, and the rosary was ticking in his lap as the maroon beads, one by one, slipped through his fingers.

“I love you,” Drummond said, expecting the boy to laugh, but he only rested his head against the seat and looked out the window at the gray city going by. ♦

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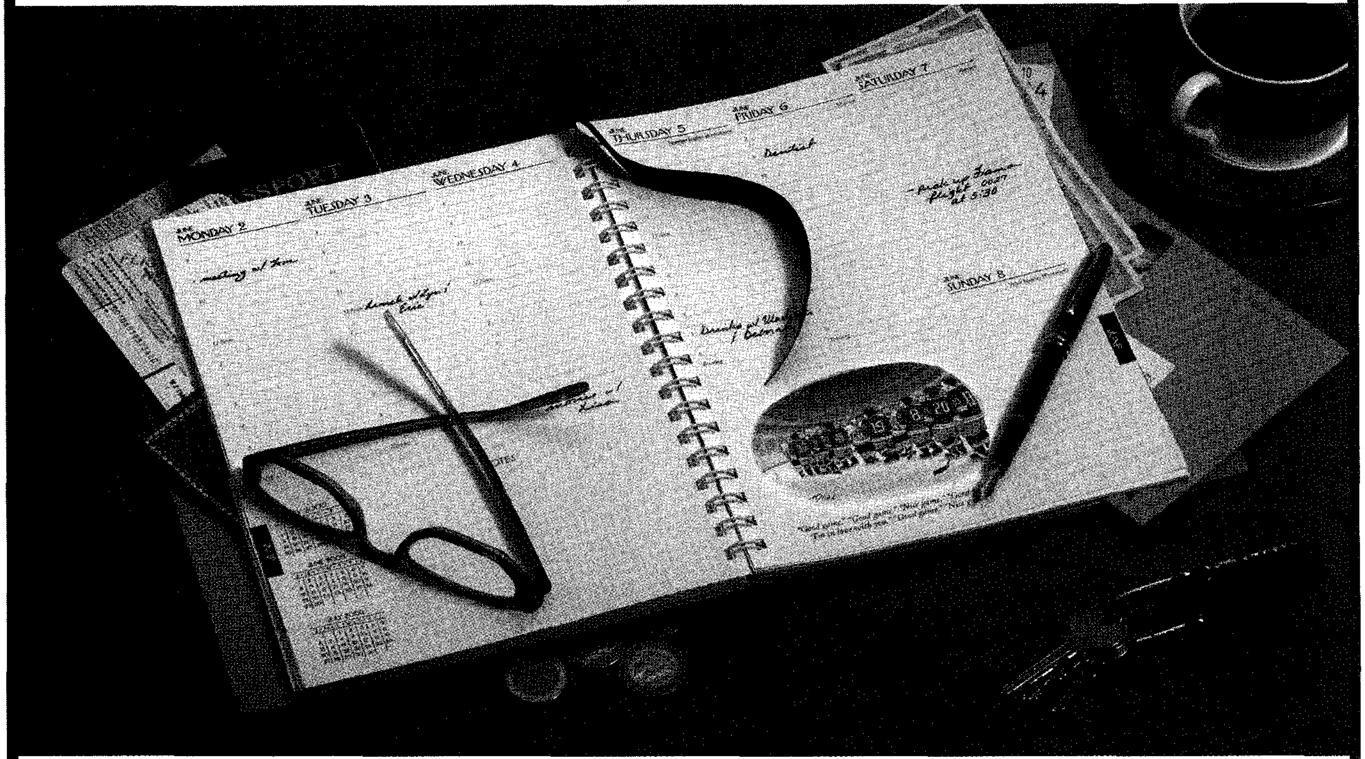
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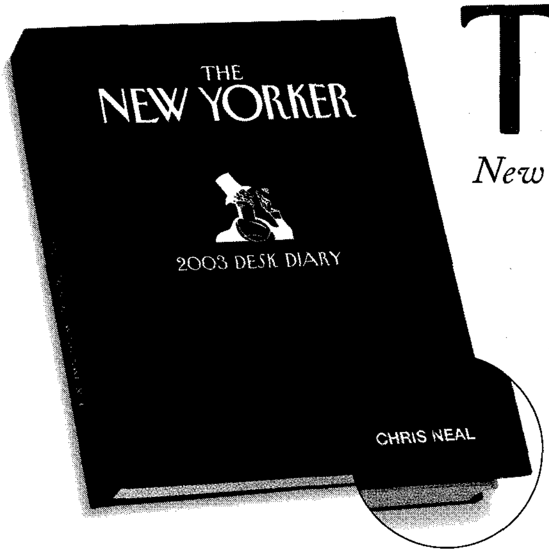
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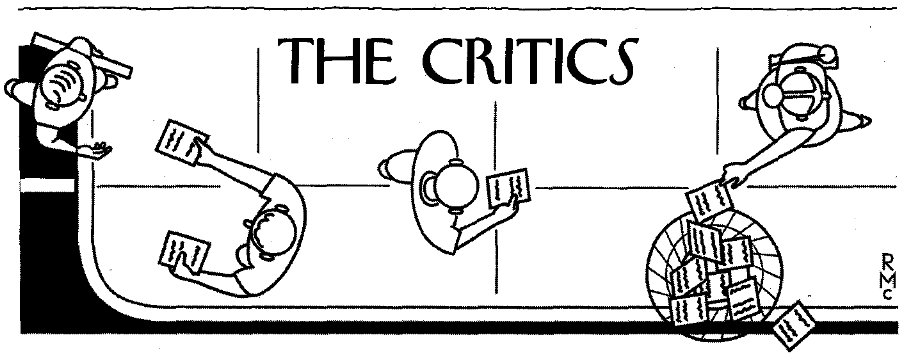


BOOKS

ÉMINENCE ROSE

Wallowing in new biographies of Madame de Pompadour.

BY JUDITH THURMAN

I spent my summer vacation reading four biographies of Mme. de Pompadour in a row. When a subject is ineffably delicious and none too wholesome, *l'appétit vient en mangeant*, and my appetite for the Marquise increased the more I read. She seems to have had the same effect on her lover, Louis XV, and on her young husband, the royally cuckolded M. d'Étioles. He fainted when he was told that he had lost her, along with his honor and his hopes for an heir. Louis's *droit du seigneur* was beyond appeal, and the adulteress was madly in love. D'Étioles retired with dignity and consoled himself like a gentleman—with a chorus girl from the opera.

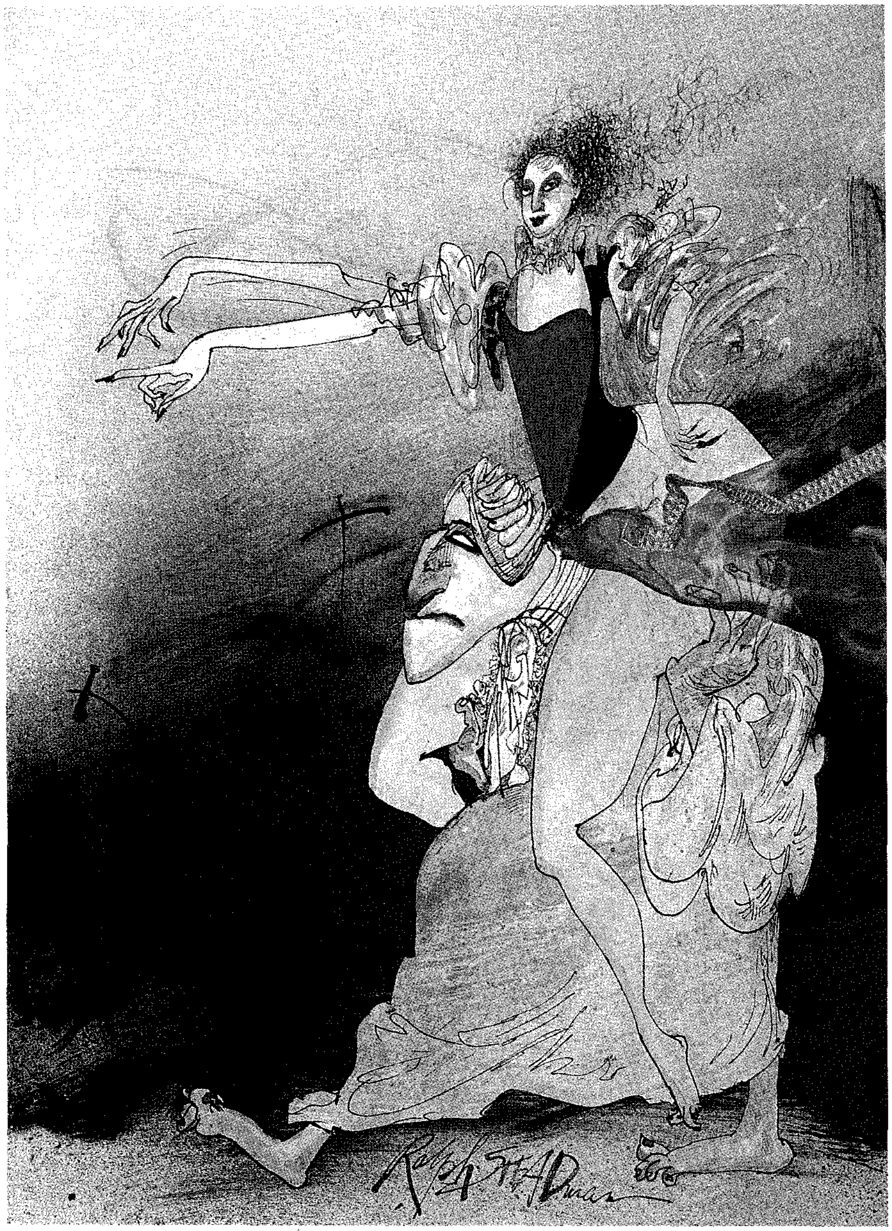
Pompadour's life (1721-64) is minutely documented by gloriously literate and astute contemporary sources (the eighteenth century does not seem to have generated another kind), including her own correspondence and the journal of her lady-in-waiting, Mme. du Hausset. Her most recent biographers have had the tact to make themselves relatively inconspicuous, though each has a virtue and a weakness that color his or her version of the same events. Colin Jones, a professor of French history, is the author of "Madame de Pompadour: Images of a Mistress" (Yale; $35), the companion volume to an exhibition of that name opening at the National Gallery in London on October 16th. His forte is iconography (or what he calls his subject's "image management"), and he assesses her character from the vantage point of her role—inflated by posterity, he believes—as a tastemaker and a patron of painting, architecture, sculpture, and design who, he writes, "presided over a period which was, it has been argued, 'a moment of perfection in French art.'" But Jones's work is more than an erudite tour of the Marquise's private collections; it offers a commanding, indeed lofty, overview of her times. He admires Pompadour's magisterial self-invention, but deplores her grandiosity, womanish myopia, and bulimic shopping. The brisk authority of his style is, like his judgment, dry almost to the point of impatience, and at times he seems like the bishop at an orgy: embarrassed to be associated with so much obscene frivolity.

Evelyne Lever's "Madame de Pompadour," translated from the French by Catherine Temerson (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $26), and Christine Pevitt Algrant's "Madame de Pompadour: Mistress of France" (Grove; $27.50) are compact, sympathetic lives aimed at an intelligent popular readership. Lever's portrait is more revealing of the intimate life. Algrant is the subtler political historian. Both write engagingly, and neither feels obliged, as Jones does, to introduce any lugubrious references to "hegemony" or "gender politics." But they also left me with the question I have always asked myself about that other royal horse-whisperer, the Duchess of Windsor. What on earth did Pompadour know about men and sex (or was it image management?) that gave her such power to enthrall?

Working downward on the scale of objectivity and upward in literary distinction, I came, at last, to Nancy Mitford's passionately partial "Madame de Pompadour," published in 1954. Mitford rather blithely overlooks the fact that Pompadour was monstrously vain and Louis a tragic blunderer, but she has a decided advantage as their biographer. She is herself a consummate woman of the world and, more precisely, a connoisseur of snobbery in all its nuances. It may also help to have been, as Mitford was, the long-suffering mistress of an aristocratic and unfaithful French politician. In her first few pages, which are devoted to Louis's childhood sufferings, she settled my question about Pompadour's secret.

The King was orphaned at the age of two, in 1712, when in one traumatic fortnight he lost his entire family—parents and siblings—to a violent contagion, though their deaths were hastened by the court physician, Dr. Fagon: "killer of Princes," as Mitford calls him. Louis escaped the same fate only because his governess, the redoubtable Duchesse de Ventadour, refused to hand him over for treatment and hid him away. The Duc d'Orléans, his regent, and Cardinal Dubois, his prime minister, let *maman de Ventadour* assuage his terrors and indulge him without measure until the age of seven, when he was pried screaming from her arms, confided to his tutors, and dressed in the ceremonial hair shirt of his exaltation. He had inherited the throne two years earlier, upon the death of his great-grandfather Louis XIV. The first years of his reign were happy for France, and the people loved him, but even when they ceased to—blaming Pompadour for his gross neglect of their welfare—it was not because he had become a despot. Louis was a sovereign without a mind of his own, who, as the Comte d'Argenson put it, "adopted a jargon of feelings, a jargon of political arguments, composed of different comments that he has heard from other people, without the slightest inclusion of common sense . . . or even comprehension." It was a recipe for becoming putty in a woman's hands.

The orphan grew into a fitfully depressive man in chronic need of distraction from his torments. Pompadour alone could always lift his spirits, and



Given power by her lover, Louis XV, Mme. de Pompadour more or less ran France.

RALPH STEADMAN

she devoted her life to reënacting his first dramatic rescue. They were perpetually in flight. Much of her energy and a good portion of the kingdom's taxes were spent on the buying or building and doing up (with an architect of genius, Gabriel) what, in essence, was a relay of safe houses: sublimely refined châteaus and hermitages where the strict protocol of the palace didn't apply. At Crécy, Bellevue, and Ménars, or in the privacy of the "*petits appartements*" at Versailles, they were screened (though never opaquely) from the critical scrutiny of ten thousand eyes. Louis even liked to make their after-dinner coffee.

His ultimate hiding place, however, was Pompadour's love, an alloy of the slavish and the steely. The royal children expressed its nature perhaps better than they knew when they dubbed the favorite Mommy Whore.

If Hillary Clinton had held every Cabinet position in her husband's Administration and controlled every appointment, her influence might have approximated Pompadour's at the height of her power. She was instrumental in framing domestic and cultural policy; she promoted French craftsmanship and valor (the porcelain factory at Sèvres and the École Militaire were among her pet projects); the Paris police and postal chiefs were on her payroll, so she vetted all the most pertinent (and impertinent) mail. She held court enthroned at her dressing table in a boudoir hung with mythologized likenesses of her, and Princes of the Blood and grizzled warriors descended from Charlemagne stood humbly beside the ambassadors of foreign majesties as she applied her rouge and, just as profligately, dispensed her patronage. Though Louis kept some secrets from her, and occasionally ignored her advice, there was virtually no high commission, ministerial portfolio, alliance, diplomatic post, important public-works project, royal favor, invitation, or marriage contract authorized against the will of the Marquise. She sent battle plans to French generals at the front, enclosing maps that she had marked coquettishly with her beauty spots. "You will admit later," she told the Duc d'Aiguillon, who was fending off a British invasion of Brittany, "that I am insufferable in always being right." But the insufferable offense was that she wasn't. It was Pompadour who engineered the reversal of alliances in the mid-seventeen-fifties that embroiled France in that wretched conflict the Seven Years War.

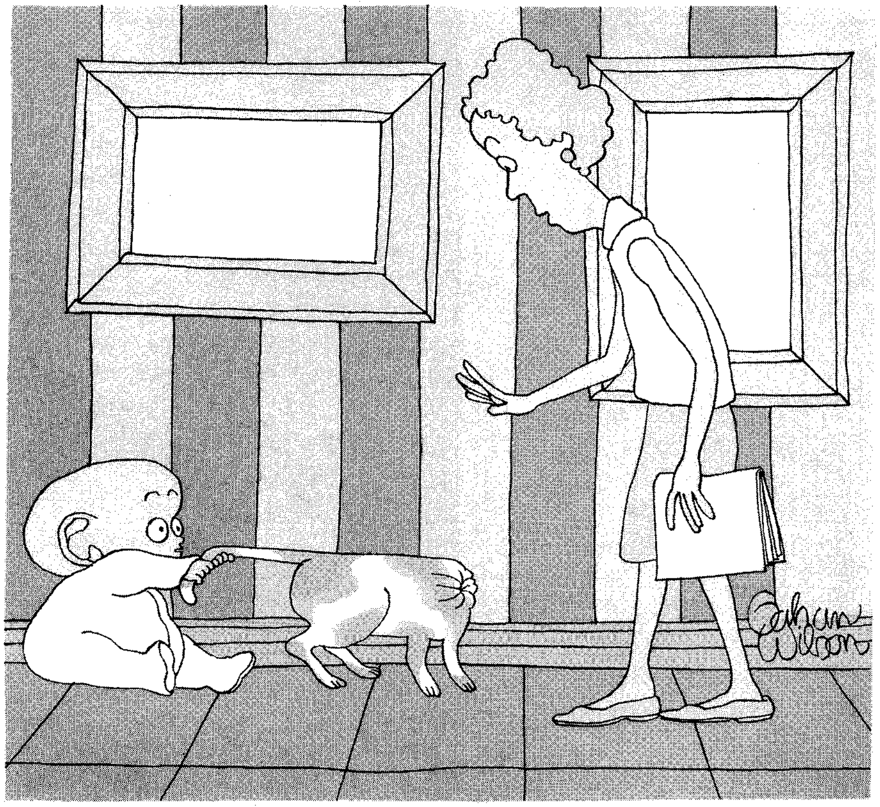
Pompadour's trajectory is nearly as improbable as Napoleon's. She was born Jeanne-Antoinette Poisson into an obscure and dubiously respectable middle-class Parisian family, albeit one with grand connections. Her father, François Poisson, a widower of humble origins, was in his mid-forties when he married a dark-haired and "devilishly" lovely young woman from the same milieu. He had made his fortune in the service of the Pâris brothers, shadowy financiers who had accumulated fabulous wealth and insidiously pervasive influence through loans to the crown and contracts to provision the Army. (In time of war, which was a lot of the time, their network was so indispensable that they virtually ran the country.)

Poisson travelled frequently in their employ, and he seems to have done some of their dirty work. In his absence, and particularly during a period when he lived abroad to avoid a prison sentence for speculating on wheat during a famine, Mme. Poisson is said to have amused herself disreputably. The paternity of Jeanne-Antoinette has long been debated. She bears a strong resemblance, if not in looks, in force of character, to her godfather, Jean Pâris, who was known as Pâris de Montmartel, but her biographers also point to the attentions that another august family protector, the *fermier-général* (tax collector) Charles-François Lenormand de Tournehem, lavished upon her and her mother. Pompadour's contemporaries found it difficult to believe that she could be the daughter of a vulgar nobody like Poisson. Yet the family name and its quick-to-rot, up-from-the-slime associations would be a boon to her enemies—authors of malicious ditties known as *poissonades*.

The little girl, however, had nothing but rapt devotees. This radiant child performer of almost Mozartian poise and precocity enchanted everyone who met her, beginning with the Ursuline nuns at the convent in Poissy where she boarded until she was brought home at the age of eight. Tournehem, a childless widower a decade younger than Poisson, was the uncle of poor d'Étioles. He paid for Jeanne-Antoinette's deluxe education, arranged her marriage, settled a fortune upon the balky groom (delightful as she was, Poisson's daughter was beneath him, though the warmth of felicity soon evaporated his reluctance), and sponsored the entrance of his "niece" into society. In the early seventeen-forties, the delectable young matron was taken up by Mme. Geoffrin and Mme. de Tencin, and she became an ornament of their salons, where the Encyclopedists were practicing their marksmanship for the skirmishes of the Enlightenment. One of Mme. d'Étioles's fellow-habitués, who became a lifelong friend, mentor, gadfly, eulogist, and sometime protégé, was Voltaire. Though his judgment may have been clouded by infatuation, he praised her for having "a mind full of refinement and a heart full of justice." He also couldn't get over how many books she had read.

When Jeanne-Antoinette was nine, her mother took her to the famous fortune-teller Mme. Lebon, who predicted that she would become the king's mistress. In 1730, Louis XV was not only a virtual divinity of absolute temporal power but a dazzlingly handsome Prince Charming of twenty. It is easy to imagine that a young girl might dream idly of being loved by him (it is easy to imagine that an entire kingdom of smitten maidens nurtured such a fantasy), though he had been married at fifteen to a homely Polish princess and was, briefly, like so many of the Bourbons, a uxorious husband. But Mme. Poisson encouraged her precious Reinette (Queenie) to dream on. Having been reclaimed from the pious tutelage of the nuns, she was henceforth groomed, like her latter-day avatar, Gigi, with all the resources at the family's collective disposal—which were as mighty as their lack of scruples—to be, as Tournehem put it, "*un morceau de roi*" (a morsel fit for a king).

Among Pompadour's many gifts was a genius for ingratiation. She was one of those girls and women who are a pleasure to spoil. They have never, in their lives, ever had a better time or a more special treat than the one you are giving them. Such a talent tarnishes quickly without a conscientious effort to keep it bright. Pompadour was rarely ungrateful—she never disowned her embarrassing family—and she prized fidelity (to herself and the King) above all other virtues and rewarded it opulently. This criterion for state service tends to produce mediocrity and stagnation when applied exclusively, since the faithful are not, history suggests, always the wise.



"You mustn't pull the cat's tail so hard it tugs the head inside, sweetie!"

Marie Leczinska, the Queen of France, was seven years older than her husband, and in 1745, when Louis met Mme. d'Étioles, she was a frumpy old lady of forty-two and the mother of seven children—six hard-to-marry princesses and one priggish Dauphin. She had done her duty and now turned her attention to prayer, games of *cavagnole*—she was an unlucky gambler—and charitable works. Louis's valets, one of whom was reported to have been the paramour of Mme. Poisson, often served as his procurers, and the King liked slumming with them in disguise. But, being a devout hierarch, he had, like his forebears, always chosen his official mistresses from the *noblesse d'épée*. He was now in the market for a new favorite, and every faction at court had its candidate. Speculation was high. No one, except perhaps she herself and her pit crew, considered Mme. d'Étioles, with her spotty pedigree, even a remote long shot. Her reputation as "the prettiest woman in Paris" had, however, been touted intriguingly in court circles, and the royal hunt sometimes passed through the Sénart forest, near her château at Étioles. There she stationed herself in the King's path, "and either she wore a light blue dress and rode in a pink phaeton," Lever tells us, "or she wore a pink dress and rode in a blue carriage." Note was taken.

Jeanne-Antoinette had no intention

of becoming one of the sovereign's *passades*. Her chance at "the big niche," as she put it, came at a masked ball that was given at Versailles in honor of the marriage of the Dauphin to a Spanish princess—an open house to which anyone properly dressed was invited. (Guests arriving without a sword could rent one from the footmen.) Like many celebrities, the King sometimes went to comic lengths to preserve his anonymity in a crowd. This time, his ruse was so fanciful that it inspired a number of engravings. He and his gentlemen were rigged up as a hedge of yew trees clipped like the topiaries in the garden. One of the yews went off with a lissome Diana, and later, with masks removed, His Majesty and Mme. d'Étioles were seen flirting strenuously. In the weeks to come, her carriage was constantly on the road to or from Versailles. Tournehem sent the husband on a business trip to Provence.

One should probably mention that in 1745 France was at war with Austria, the Netherlands, and England, to no great profit for the people, who were, as usual, being bled to death for the sake of a county here, a border there, part of a colony, an ancient quarrel, a stupid promise, or a pleasant sinecure for the eldest of Louis's daughters, Mme. Infante, who was bored at the Spanish court of her in-laws and begged Papa to help make her Duchess of Parma. Having picked a new mistress off the rack, Louis left her with his tailors for some adjustment, and went off, in high spirits, to the front. Mme. d'Étioles now retired to her estate to prepare for her presentation at court. Voltaire was one of the Pygmalions who helped prep her for Versailles, along with the seasoned Abbé de Bernis, who advised her always to "protect writers," which she tried to do until they proved too subversive. (Bernis served in high positions and as her counsellor and close friend until 1758, when, judging his lucidity to have curdled into "defeatism," she arranged for his banishment.)

Louis's love letters, which arrived almost daily, were sealed with a cachet that bore the motto "Discretion and Fidelity." One of them contained the *lettres de noblesse* for the extinct marquisate of Pompadour. It came with an escutcheon, a château, and lands for which Pâris de Montmartel picked up the check (and certainly deducted it). The new Marquise was a quick study for any part, and over the summer she relearned how to walk and talk, this time like a great lady, and she mastered the esoteric codes that governed the life of every palace inmate, but especially the monarch. He was, Jones notes, "inordinately proud" of her transformation. Mitford, however, claims that the Marquise "hardly bothered" to change her bourgeois ways, always expressed herself with uncourtly frankness in a loud voice, laughed freely, and "gave herself no airs." Louis was charmed by some of her locutions. In any case, on the day of her presentation to a hostile court prepared to annihilate her with ridicule, she was perfection itself.

One almost has the feeling about Pompadour that some consortium of fairies decided, on a bet or whim, to create an ideal feminine specimen as their plaything, investing a human doll with their own attributes for the purpose of seeing how far that endowment would take her in the world, and what she would do with it. Like all great sirens, she sang hauntingly, and, in her tireless effort to keep Louis amused and besotted, she organized a repertory company that gave amateur theatricals of professional quality in the several private theatres she had constructed—each a jewel box. For the five years this enterprise was in operation, the favorite starred in and directed a hundred and twenty-two performances of sixty-one different operas, plays, and ballets, outclassing, it was said, some of the leading lights of the Comédie-Française. (Courtiers, Mitford writes, "became perfectly hysterical" in their efforts to get a walk-on role, or even simply a ticket.) Onstage, at least, the Marquise was working from a script. In daily life, her survival depended on the virtuosity of her improvisations.

Yet perhaps because perversity is the hallmark of gods everywhere, Pompadour's good fairies overlooked a few basics. She had a fragile constitution, suffering from chronic migraines, lung ailments, and a vaginal discharge recorded for posterity in a malicious quatrain disseminated by the evil Comte de Maurepas. She died at forty-two, probably of congestive heart failure, but also worn out by her hummingbird's existence. Oddly, too, for someone in her line of

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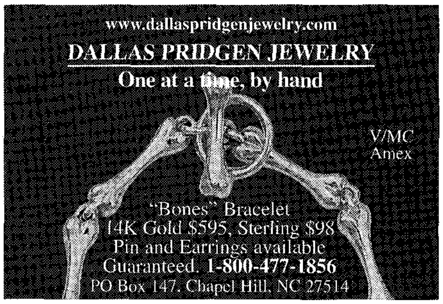

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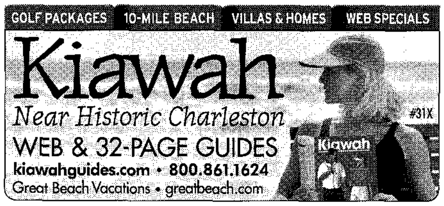

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work, she often lamented that Louis found her, despite her best exertions, "cold and passive," although her frigidity didn't chill his ardor. He had made her his *maîtresse en titre* in defiance of protocol, and he would continue to promote her as he pleased. That was the adolescent aspect of their, and perhaps of every, enduring romance: it was the two of them against the world. For nearly twenty years, until her death, in the second-best bedroom at Versailles, Pompadour reigned as the virtual queen of France—and perhaps one could say its first meritocratically appointed civil servant. She had outscored her rivals on the written, oral, and physical parts of a gruelling exam that was re-administered every day of her life.

I suspect that, like the most artful of Rasputins, Pompadour dosed Louis with just enough unconditional maternal comforting and just enough well-sweetened guilt to induce in him a permanent semicoma of habit and dependence and to check his omnipotence and wrath. Then, when she needed him to throw the lightening bolts of his displeasure or shed the rays of his bounty for her benefit, she would supply the antidote of her adoration. She worked her will on him—greatly to her own glory, of course—but also sometimes to oblige other deserving parties, such as the *philosophes*, her "clients" at court, or his wife. The rightful queen was surprisingly tolerant of her new rival, and the royal mistress reciprocated with a touching and politic deference to Her Majesty. Early in their liaison, the favorite got the King to pay off the Queen's gambling debts, redecorate her shabby apartments, and present her with a gold snuffbox (originally commissioned, however, for Mme. Poisson). She also eventually suggested that her own position would be morally enhanced (it never was) if the Queen accepted her as a lady-in-waiting—an honor reserved for the most irreproachable duchesses. A ducal upgrade facilitated the affair, though Pompadour, with well-bred *pudeur*, never adopted the grander of her titles. She possessed the most endearing weakness of the arriviste, a desire to please, and when she made a show of grovelling she always did so with impressive natural dignity. More endearing still, she had the tact to miscarry every bastard the two sinners conceived.

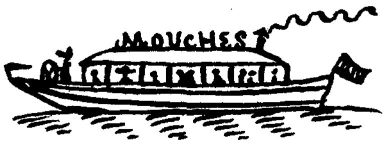
No royal mistress in the minutely calibrated hierarchy of the ancien régime could ever be the Queen's equal, but this one made herself the King's master. Even as she lost her ravishing looks and Louis satisfied his lusts elsewhere, Pompadour consolidated her prestige. It was she, not the King, who was supposed to have said, using the royal and/or conjugal we, "*après nous, le déluge*" (though it is doubtful that Pompadour said any such thing—she was too congenital an optimist). But in her lifetime nothing could dethrone her: not the nymphets of the Parc-aux-Cerfs, Louis's private brothel; or the shifting palace cabals that were ceaselessly intriguing against her; or the vehement hostility of a populace that blamed her extravagance, plausibly, for its crushing taxes and starvation; or a clergy that saw her as the devil's handmaid for whose sake the Very Christian King had forsaken Communion and his family; or even the debacle of an abject military defeat in the Seven Years' War, for which she and her ill-chosen champions and silly maps were a good deal to blame. Except for Bonaparte, and perhaps Robespierre, whose tenures were briefer, and de Gaulle, who was in principle answerable to an electorate, no French commoner—and certainly no woman—ever achieved such imperial sway. But what did she achieve with it?

"The marquise had none of the great vices of ambitious women," the Abbé de Bernis wrote, "but she had all the pettiness and unreliability of women intoxicated with their looks and their self-proclaimed intelligence." Diderot's postmortem was more severe: "So what remains of this woman who cost us so much in men and money, left us without honor and without energy, and who overthrew the whole political system of Europe? The Treaty of Versailles which will last as long as it lasts; Bouchardon's *Amour* which will be admired for ever; a few stones engraved by Guay which will amaze the antiquaries of the future; a nice little picture by van Loo which people will look at sometimes, and a handful of dust." Had she only served France as well as she loved Louis, it might yet be a Bourbon monarchy. What she left, besides a staggering inventory of choice possessions that took a team of notaries a year to appraise, is a mystery still worthy of contemplation: did Pompadour fulfill a great destiny or betray one? ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

Brotherhood of the Bomb, *by Gregg Herken (Holt; $30).* This meticulous history tells the story of the birth of the nuclear age through the biographies of the era's most influential physicists—Robert Oppenheimer, Ernest Lawrence, and Edward Teller. Although they began as friends, and shared a common interest in insuring that the U.S. would be the first country to have an atomic bomb, the three scientists soon parted ways. Teller became obsessed with building ever-bigger bombs, and Lawrence set about consolidating his power in the research establishment, while Oppenheimer found his ambitions to influence nuclear strategy compromised by questions about his loyalty. Herken's grasp of the human side of this drama feels limited; in particular, the relationships between the scientists remain curiously inert. But his research is impeccable, and he has uncovered important material suggesting that Oppenheimer, contrary to his denials, was in fact a Communist during the nineteen-thirties. More important, Herken illuminates the impact of politics on science, showing how strategic considerations and bureaucratic infighting shaped the course of atomic research. There was no ivory tower when it came to the bomb.

Clearances: A Memoir, *by Mairi MacInnes (Pantheon; $24).* In the first paragraph, we find MacInnes, the distinguished English poet, telling an American professor that she is from County Durham. He says there is no such place. "But I was born there," she protests. "You should check it out," he replies. "It may have been eliminated." The book proceeds from there like a stone down a hill. Reared by a mother who wished her only the best—a successful husband—MacInnes eventually married the literary critic John McCormick, who constantly went off without her to do research in nice places. She lobbied in vain for a life of her own, for time to write, all the while reproaching herself for caring too much about the house, the children, the cat. The lives of most educated women have changed, but one wishes that their memoirs were more like this: so intelligent, nuanced, and torn.



Sloan-Kettering, *by Abba Kovner, translated from the Hebrew by Eddie Levenston (Schocken; $17).* Kovner, an Israeli writer and resistance fighter, led the famous Vilna ghetto uprising in Lithuania during the Second World War; in these plainspoken poems he writes about his hospitalization for cancer, which killed him in 1987. Weaving together memories of fighting in the Baltic forests and the chronicle of a rapidly weakening body (at a certain point his vocal cords are cut out), Kovner meditates on the possibility of heroism in the face of illness. "Remain what you were! / Remain what you were!" he writes, reminding himself, "Far worse / were the things you have already seen, / by God!" Kovner's physical muteness makes the book's imperative to witness all the more moving; in the face of his ultimate silence, he strenuously refuses self-pity, choosing instead to show us how "you could take explicit note / of the wail rising from the pine trees / from branches weighed down / with so much snow."

The Man Who Rode Ampersand, *by Ferdinand Mount (Carroll & Graf; $25).* Far into this dense, splendid novel, Aldous Cotton, who has constructed an indelible portrait of his lamentable father, Harry, remarks, "As a child I was sheltered from everything except happiness." Perhaps this explains his admiration for a progenitor whom anyone else would consider a bit of a trial. Harry, a puckish version of Eliza Doolittle's papa, is a sometime jockey whose sweetest moment was spent astride the prizewinner Ampersand. His whole life—fisticuffs, whoring, obsessive gambling are its main features—is a loop-the-loop around that triumph. Mount is so good at conjuring up time and place—here it's pre-Second World War London—that the dust motes make you blink.

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THE SKY LINE

MIAMI VICE

Is this the ugliest building in New York?

BY PAUL GOLDBERGER

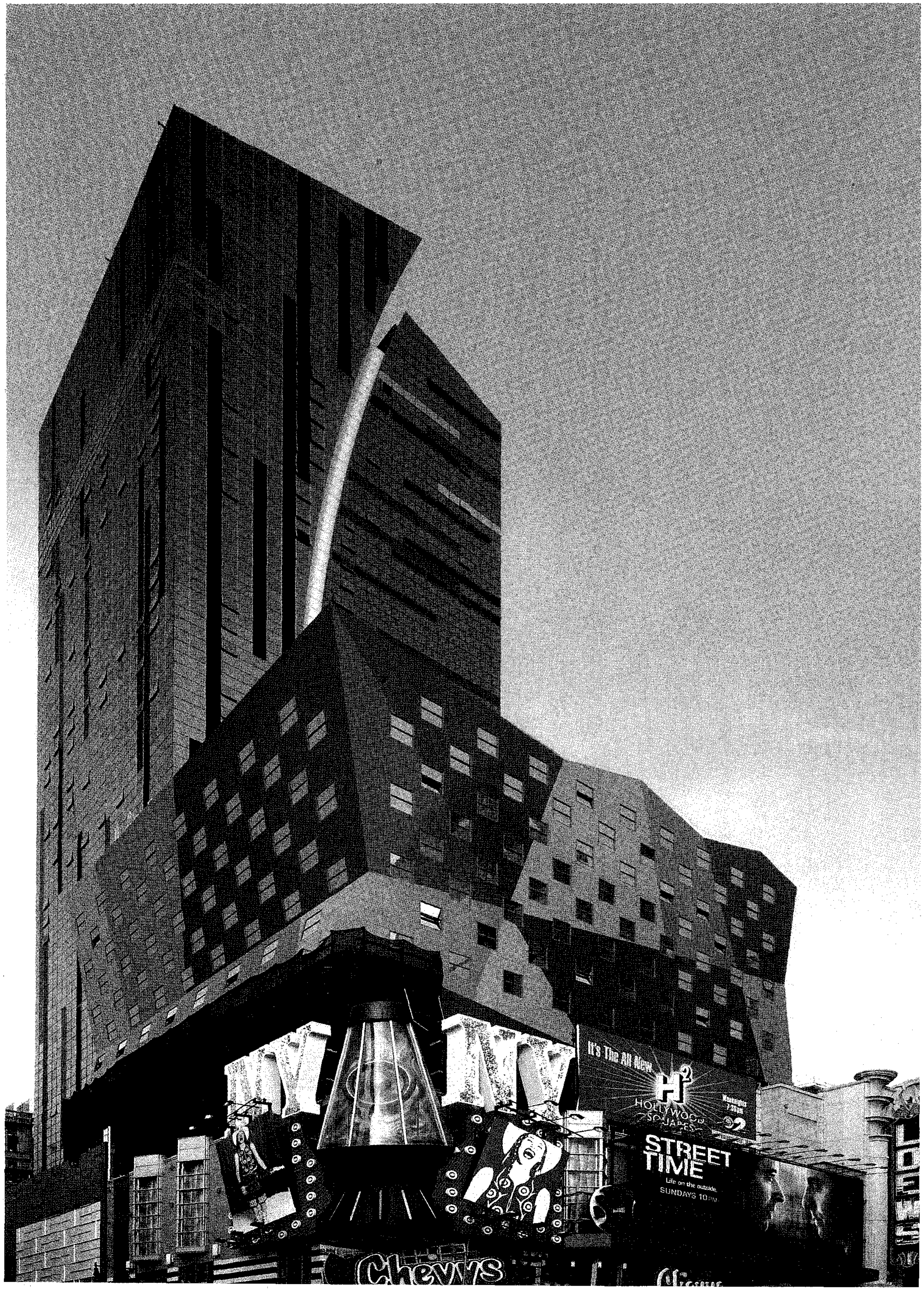
Guests at the new Westin hotel, which stretches between Forty-second Street and Forty-third Street on Eighth Avenue, will have a pretty good view of one of the most revered modern skyscrapers in New York, the bluish-green McGraw-Hill Building, half a block to the west. A short walk in the other direction will bring them to what is probably the most beloved skyscraper anywhere, the Chrysler Building. When the McGraw-Hill Building was finished, in 1932, it was dismissed by the architecture critic of this magazine, George S. Chappell, as "a stunt and not a particularly successful one." Chappell, who wrote as T-Square, said that the Chrysler Building had "no significance as serious design." Lewis Mumford called it "a series of restless mistakes . . . this inane romanticism, this meaningless voluptuousness."

The Westin will probably be received in pretty much the same way, but I doubt that history will reverse the verdict. The building is not ahead of its time, like the McGraw-Hill Building, which is an early International Style tower. And it is certainly not the contemporary equivalent of a graceful exercise in Jazz Age syncopation, which is how people came to view the Chrysler Building. The forty-five-story Westin is the most garish tall building that has gone up in New York in as long as I can remember. It is fascinating, if only because it makes Times Square vulgar in a whole new way, extending up into the sky.

It is not easy, these days, to go beyond the bounds of taste. If the architects, the Miami-based firm Arquitectonica, had been trying to allude to bad taste, one could perhaps respect what they came up with. But they simply wanted, like most architects today, to entertain us. This is less a building than a concept, and you can imagine its being pitched to the developer, Tishman Realty & Construction, the way producers pitch a television show to network executives: Audiences now don't want plain towers that go straight up, and they're not going to be satisfied with just a fancy top, so we've come up with a way to make the whole building into a vibrant, dynamic object. The developer bought this, and ended up with a skyscraper split down the middle by a big, swooping white line on its north and south sides. To the east of the swooping line, the building is sheathed in a vaguely copper-colored, pinkish glass, set in horizontal panels. The west side is covered in blue glass, set vertically. The notion, according to Bernardo Fort-Brescia, who, along with his wife and partner, Laurinda Spear, heads Arquitectonica, is that the east side of the tower is "earthbound, anchored to the ground"—hence the horizontal lines and the warm color—while the blue-toned, vertical-lined side, which is taller, is "skybound."

Well, O.K. This is no more superficial than the reasoning that goes into plenty of other buildings today. And I have to admit that the Westin looked rather sexy in the renderings that were shown around in 1995, when Arquitectonica and the developer won a competition, sponsored by the government's 42nd Street Development Project, to build a major hotel in the "new" Times Square. But, just as Hollywood concepts have a way of evolving, the Westin that has gone up bears only a slight resemblance to the drawings. It is both shrill and banal, less a piece of architecture than a developer's box in drag. The Westin forces you, as no piece of architecture in this city has in a very long time, to come to terms with exactly what makes a building so strident that it enthralls in the way a gruesome accident does.

The main problem isn't the shape,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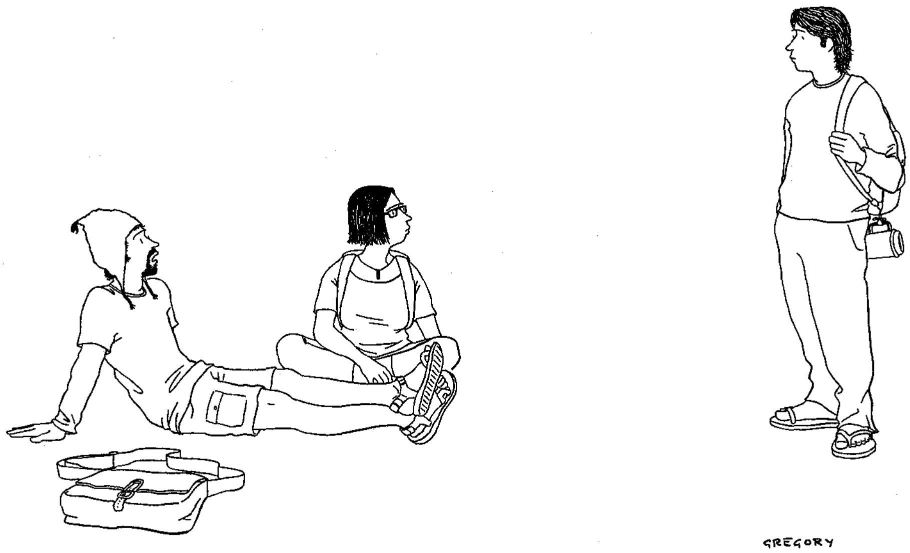
The Forty-second Street side of the Westin New York at Times Square, designed by Arquitectonica. Photograph by Todd Eberle.

which, while self-conscious, isn't awful. In fact, from a couple of blocks south, on Eighth Avenue, where you can see the tower in full profile, the mass of the building is striking. No tower meets the sky quite like this one. The blue section swoops over the pink one as if it were slicing into open space. At night, the white line will be lit up on the Forty-second Street side of the building, and spotlights on the roof will pick up the motif and shoot a ray of light into the sky. But it makes no sense to design a single building to look as if it were two different, clashing buildings. The two parts aren't different structurally and they aren't doing different things inside. There is no logical reason to split a skyscraper vertically with a curving line, or to make one section play at hugging the ground and another section play at reaching to the sky. It's all pretense—not the kind of pretense that brings us fake Georgian or fake Renaissance but the pretense that the hoopla is somehow connected to a meaningful architectural idea. Everything Arquitectonica has done here is as superficially decorative as if the building had been sheathed in classical columns and pilasters. Fort-Brescia told me that the line just came to them. "Laurinda and I literally took a drawing and slashed a line across it," he said. "There is a rational side to our profession, but there is a lot that is intuitive."

I could live with the zooping and swooping if it weren't for the way the shape of the building is covered. The glass must be the ugliest curtain wall in New York. Make that the two ugliest curtain walls in New York, since the pink section and the blue section are ugly in different ways. They are both unpleasant to look at—tawdry colors, gaudy finishes. As if that weren't enough, the architects have decorated each section with stripes in darker tones that they call "brushstrokes," but which do not succeed in making the building look even remotely like a painting. It's as if Fort-Brescia and Spear had no faith in the shape they made, and could not stop themselves from tarting it up.

The tower marks the northwestern boundary of the Times Square redevelopment project, which includes four office towers around Times Square itself, as well as new movie houses, stores, and a few restored landmark theatres along Forty-second Street. The main entrance to the hotel is through a blessedly ordinary modern base of clear glass on Forty-third Street. Things are quite different on the south side of the Westin, however, the side that faces Forty-second Street, where the redevelopment project's planners insisted that the hotel have a big, boxy base to tie it into the so-called "entertainment zone"—the open-air suburban mall, in other words—that Forty-second Street was in the process of becoming. The base, which the architects refer to as the building's bustle, is a seventeen-story-high box that contains a thirteen-screen multiplex, stores, restaurants, and eight floors of hotel rooms. The bottom floors are covered in advertising signs, and you have never been more grateful for the excesses of capitalism. (As in most of the new Times Square, the best architecture isn't bricks and mortar but moving lights and electronic images.) On the upper floors of the bustle, the architects could not hide behind flashy signs, and their solution for a façade yielded one of the strangest attempts at decorating a box that you are ever likely to see: plain, double-hung windows set into yellow, orange, and copper-colored metal panels in large, geometric shapes at slightly tilted angles. The façade is eerily like a child's drawing, complete with crooked lines, little boxy windows, and strange colors. What it does not look like is a wing of a three-hundred-and-seventy-million-dollar commercial project in the center of New York City.

I'm not saying that a building in Times Square ought to look like a building at Rockefeller Center. Fort-Brescia told me that he wanted to respond to the atmosphere of Times Square. "We wouldn't do this on Wall Street," he said. "But Times Square is the entertainment district of New York. The building is performing. It has to be somewhat histrionic." Fort-Brescia is enthusiastic and engaging, and it's obvious why he is able to sell his designs to business people who want a little more pizzazz. Arquitectonica has an unusual history. It was established in the nineteen-seventies—Fort-Brescia and Spear are both fifty-one—and it grew very large very early, thanks mainly to the fame of a single building, the Atlantis, a waterfront condominium on Biscayne Bay in Miami. The Atlantis is a twenty-story slab with a square, four-story hole cut out of the middle. The cutout, in which a single palm tree grows, became the most famous void in contemporary architecture. It showed up in the opening sequence of "Miami Vice," and it expressed perfectly the way Miami wanted to see itself: daring, brash, and glittery. Now the building has been there so long it is practically as much a part of Miami's history as the Fontainebleau, and it looks almost quaint. But when the Atlantis was built,



"We're trying to come up with a less offensive term for 'political correctness.'"

Fort-Brescia and Spear were barely past thirty, and the combination of pragmatism and exuberance that marked their work was unusual. They suddenly found themselves among the small group of architects whom developers seek out because their names add to a building's value.

The cachet of the celebrity architect is familiar today, when condominiums by Richard Meier in the West Village sell for more than many Park Avenue apartments, but it wasn't the norm in the late nineteen-seventies and early eighties. Arquitectonica helped to create the architectural culture of this moment, such as it is, which is no small accomplishment for a young firm. And Fort-Brescia and Spear have had a singular effect on Miami, where they more or less created an architectural vernacular that mixes Latin energy and sensuousness with classic modernism. But I wonder if they haven't been hurt by too much success too soon. Michael Graves designs housewares for Target, there are Charles Gwathmey dinner plates, and condos created by Robert A. M. Stern, but those architects earned their stripes in the realm of more ambitious architecture before they went so heavily commercial. Big-time commercial work almost invariably involves big-time compromises, and Arquitectonica has often appeared a bit too eager to play the game. For all the promise of its early work, the firm didn't build up a big enough roster of serious architecture to leaven its participation in the culture of architectural celebrity, and now the thinness shows.

It's not easy to do architecture as entertainment. You see a building again and again and the jokes get old. That is not to say that architecture has to be stolid and dull to have staying power, but it does mean that it's harder to get away with being slick and superficial, even in a place like Times Square. The special qualities of Times Square as an urban space don't come from its architecture. The older buildings in the neighborhood, like the Paramount Building on Broadway or the Candler Building on Forty-second Street or the long-gone Astor Hotel, weren't all that different from buildings in other parts of town. The lights and the signs, the applied glitz, made the difference. Now, thanks to a new generation of technology, the lights and the signs are more spectacular than ever, and I wonder if we wouldn't be better off if architects recognized this, and let the new buildings recede even more than the old ones did. Why try to upstage the electronic spectacle that defines Times Square?

Arquitectonica had a much firmer sense of how far to go inside the hotel. The lobby reminds me a bit of the big entry hall at the United Nations General Assembly Building, which is one of the most underappreciated nineteen-fifties rooms in New York. Many of the details, like the elevator cabs with curving, backlit metal panels, are splendid. Because the bustle is so deep—it fills the entire front half of the site—there is a lot of leftover space in the middle, and the architects have filled it with an atrium, which is enclosed on one side by the lower floors of the tower. Thus some of the elements of the façade, including the bottom end of the swooping white line that runs all the way up the south side of the building, are elements of the atrium, too. As much as I dislike that white line on the exterior, I like seeing it close up. In the atrium, it operates in a very different way than it does on the façade. It reveals how the building is made, and is completely engaging.

The hotel rooms themselves are appointed in a kind of mass-market Ian Schraeger manner, and they're not a bad example of that design sense: slate bathrooms with stainless-steel sinks; sleek furniture. I had assumed that, in addition to providing an environment of reasonable sophistication and comfort, the rooms would have the virtue of being the one place from which you could not see the exterior of the building, but when I looked out the window of one of the westward-facing rooms, I was confronted with a projecting side of that damn bustle. There is no escape from the outside of the Westin, even inside it. ♦

DEPT. OF CLARIFICATION

From the Portland (Maine) Press Herald.

A story on Page 3B Saturday should have said Linda Ganley only accused Daniel MacArthur of being the devil, not of being unfaithful.

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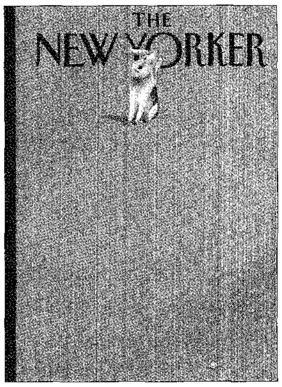

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MUSICAL EVENTS

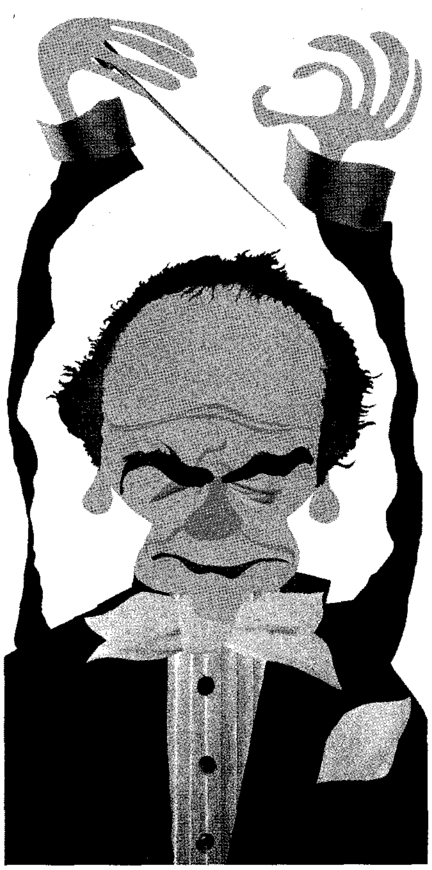
OVERTURES

The new maestros in Berlin and New York.

BY ALEX ROSS

The Berlin Philharmonie, Hans Scharoun's gold-yellow masterpiece of late-modern design, was once a temple in a wilderness. Even in 1995, when I last visited Berlin, the wreckage of history was all around: the gray crevasses where the Wall had stood; the Wilhelmine villas crumbling in the woods; the eerie meadow covering the site of Hitler's bunker. Now the Philharmonie presides at the far end of the new avenues of Potsdamer Platz, its tilted, tentlike forms grabbing the eye at every turn. The "new Berlin" takes its cue from the Philharmonie, and the heightened glamour of the hall creates an exceptional challenge for the musicians who work within it. The Berlin Philharmonic, commonly and plausibly described as the greatest orchestra in the world, must now reach out to younger generations of Berliners. The orchestra took up that challenge by electing as its next conductor not another jet-set maestro but the passionate, obstinate, charismatic Simon Rattle, who, in the eighties and nineties, turned down many job offers to remain with the City of Birmingham Symphony. In Birmingham, Rattle brought a local orchestra to the attention of the world; in Berlin, his task is to make a world-famous orchestra local again, to prove that it matters to a financially unsettled city.

To conduct the Berlin Philharmonic is to be the unofficial chairman of the board of classical music. The authority of the post derives not only from the splendor of the orchestra—its intimidating blend of virtuosity and intelligence—but also from the lustre of those who have led it in the past: Hans von Bülow, Arthur Nikisch, Wilhelm Furtwängler, Herbert von Karajan. It is not surprising that when Rattle took over from his immediate predecessor, the diffident but deep-thinking Claudio Abbado, the city made an extraordinary fuss. Walking around the city before the recent German election, you might have thought that Chancellor Gerhard Schröder and his challenger Edmund Stoiber were being upstaged by an eccentric write-in candidate named Sir Simon. ("Welcome Sir Simon," the posters said, in English, not German.) The opening concert, on September 7th, attracted the Federal President and the mayor of Berlin, along with Harald Schmidt, the German David Letterman. Ninety-eight music critics attended—an orchestra of second guessers. The reviews ranged from the wildly enthusiastic to the mildly skeptical, but no one questioned that Rattle had seized the moment.



Maazel at the New York Philharmonic.

STEPHEN KRONINGER

Rattle has walked into the middle of a complicated situation. Back in the Cold War, Berlin's music was fodder for propaganda—East and West had rival opera houses, rival concert orchestras, rival radio orchestras, and so on. Now these institutions must justify their subsidies to a unified city. According to one ominous report in circulation, the budget for opera may be cut from a hundred and fourteen million euros to fifty-five million. Rattle cannily cemented his position long before arriving on the podium: he refused to sign his contract until the orchestra had been made an independent foundation and the players' salaries raised. More recently, the papers were reporting an imbroglio involving Franz Xaver Ohnesorg, the imaginative and aggressive Intendant of the Philharmonic, who, not long ago, was causing consternation at Carnegie Hall. Ohnesorg evidently removed two plantings from the Philharmonie's foyer in order to make room for a much needed intermission bar. Guardians of Scharoun's architectural legacy were aghast—the Philharmonie was being "degraded to banality," one said—and politicians disliked the peremptory way in which Ohnesorg pushed through his plan. Bigger problems may ensue if the Intendant continues to show "poor style," as Thomas Flierl, the culture senator, put it.

The September 7th concert fell a little short of the impossibly high expectations that had been created for it. Rattle began with Thomas Adès's 1997 work "Asyla" ("Asylums"), which also appeared on the conductor's final program in Birmingham. The Philharmonic made a festive noise but never fully mastered the urban rhythms of the piece, especially the jagged syncopations of the bacchanalian third movement. And the orchestra missed Adès's undertow of dark emotion—the big E-flat-minor chord at the end, which should have been in the players' blood, came and went without causing a shudder.

Rattle sometimes brilliantly pulls a work to pieces, discovering unsuspected beauties in each part, without quite finding a way to put it back together. This is what happened to Mahler's Fifth Symphony, which followed the Adès. You could hear the still points around which Mahler's structures turn: Rattle often builds toward a whisper in place of a climax. But the result was a flurry of epiphanies rather than a single revelation. In the scherzo, Rattle had the idea of moving the first horn up to a soloist position, in front of the orchestra; the resulting concertino, while bracing to the ears, broke the symphony's flow. The Mahler was recorded by EMI for a disk that will be in the stores next month, and it may have been unwise to rush through a recording while Rattle was still finding his rhythm.

I would rather have had a recording from the following week's program—Haydn's Symphony No. 88, Magnus Lindberg's "Gran Duo," and Schubert's Ninth Symphony. Rattle is the best Haydn conductor working, and the rhythms of the symphony were an ideal embodiment of muscular grace. The Lindberg piece, scored for winds and brass, glowed in the acoustic space of the Philharmonie like a great silver mobile. But it was the Schubert that was the breakthrough. The C-Major Symphony was a Karajan specialty, and Rattle dared a comparison that he could easily have put off for a while. In the Andante, something magical happened, and the Berlin Philharmonic really became Rattle's orchestra. In the middle of the movement, a frightening tension gathered, and the climactic diminished-seventh chords turned almost expressionistically ugly. Then came an enormous pause—framed by one of those total silences that you hear only in German concert halls—and the solo cello sang out at a halting tempo, as if from another world. For the first time, you could see how Rattle's pointillistic epiphanies would work with the orchestra's tradition of rich-toned, chiaroscuro sound. Orchestra and conductor had become one animal.

When I last checked in, Rattle was preparing Mark-Anthony Turnage's "Blood on the Floor," a symphonic suite, with jazz-fusion interludes, depicting the life and death of heroin addicts. Later this season, Rattle will lead "The Rite of Spring" in a former East Berlin bus depot, with a troupe of two hundred student dancers. He wants to take the orchestra out of the Philharmonie and throw it into the life of the city. The Philharmonic is to be both a traditional army of one hundred and an array of tactical units—wind bands, string bands, chamber groups, avant-garde ensembles, jazz combos. The astonishingly young-looking orchestra—the average age is around forty—appears eager to take it all on. I am inclined to agree with what Nicholas Kenyon writes in his biography of Rattle: "This could change the musical world."

Eleven days after Rattle's début, Lorin Maazel conducted his first concert as the music director of the New York Philharmonic. This will not change the musical world. Maazel's appointment came after a long and not very interesting soap opera in which all the usual names were in play. Rattle went unmentioned because he has never conducted the orchestra; according to Kenyon, he is leery of the Philharmonic's reputation for humiliating new conductors. The orchestra went for Maazel presumably on the ground that this seasoned maestro exudes easy authority and takes a no-nonsense approach to rehearsal. He has been in many places—Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Vienna, Munich—and not all his former colleagues speak of him fondly. He has a clear, electrifying technique and a prodigious ear for detail. He is also unpredictable: performances of his that I have heard over the years have ranged from the propulsive to the repulsive, with few subtle shades in between.

A friend whose musical judgment I trust says that Maazel has mellowed in recent years, grown more questing and generous. There was evidence of this in the program I heard last Tuesday, which combined Beethoven's Ninth with a new work by John Adams, "On the Transmigration of Souls." The Andante of the Beethoven had a buoyancy that the orchestra rarely achieved under the all too sturdy hand of Kurt Masur; the strings came to life with singing lines and plush textures. But there were also many glimpses of Maazel's familiar tics. In the first movement, he repeatedly applied the brakes in passages that Beethoven marked "a tempo"; that is, don't slow down. The movement didn't so much end as grind to a halt. In the Scherzo, the timpanist was asked to produce various attention-getting thwacks—again, at precisely those points where Beethoven wanted something more subtle. The Finale had infectious energy—Marina Mescheriakova, Jill Grove, Thomas Studebaker, and Peter Rose sang, together with the New York Choral Artists—but Maazel's heavy-footed tempos again slowed the work's momentum. This Beethoven Ninth came nowhere near the nobility of Masur's best performances; instead, it stomped toward pompous cliché.

On the evidence of the Adams première, we can at least look forward to exacting performances of contemporary music, which Masur tended to make a mess of. "On the Transmigration of Souls" sets to music the plainspoken, heartfelt language surrounding the events of September 11th: the final words of victims, exclamations of grief, missing-persons signs, scattered phrases like "Windows on the World." Orchestra and chorus are blended with a tape collage of voices and noises. Adams does not try to depict the destruction of the World Trade Center blow by blow, nor does he write an official requiem. Instead, his music captures, on some raw, unconscious level, what it was like to *be* in the city on September 11th—to see millions wandering without purpose, to hear those importuning voices, to feel grief in sunshine. At the climax, the massed voices—here including the marvellous Brooklyn Youth Chorus, under the direction of Dianne Berkun—sing the words "Light! Sky! Day!" obsessively, and the music climbs far into the upper register, forming terrible bright chords of D major and C major combined. Then it all vanishes, and a semblance of ordinary life resumes: sounds of cars, buses, voices, footsteps.

If Maazel had begun his tenure with this extraordinary work, he would have signalled his commitment to classical music as a contemporary art. But, on his very first night, he conducted Beethoven's third "Leonore" Overture in place of the Adams. By way of explanation, the Philharmonic said that there was not enough rehearsal time to prepare the Adams properly. Aren't million-dollar maestros hired precisely for their ability to surmount such obstacles? The Philharmonic's reluctance to confront its black-tie customers with contemporary sounds revealed at once the gap between this regime and Rattle's in Berlin. It is the distance between caution and courage, inertia and imagination. ♦

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THE THEATRE

HAM, INTERRUPTED

Langston Hughes—the musical.

BY HILTON ALS

In 1966, near the end of his life, Langston Hughes sent an anthology of short stories he had edited to Marianne Moore, that most psychologically astute of modernist poets. Moore wrote back to congratulate him on having managed to get a group of young black writers published at a time when almost no one of a similar stature, it seemed, was even trying to do so. "Inimitable, irresistible Langston," she wrote. "I do not know why you were not spoiled with love and care, from the cradle on, and were not a proud boy!" Hughes's pathos—as a man and as a writer—lies, of course, in the various pleas for love he made, not for himself but for his race. As a "race man," Hughes didn't have to deal with his own complicated sexuality; he could ignore his socially prominent "fair-skinned" family's ambivalence about blackness and his fundamental inability—fostered in his youth, when he was shuttled between his divorced parents or simply dumped at his grandmother's—to form a deep emotional attachment to any one person. The root of his charm was his willingness to act as a guardian and versifier of the "weary blues," which he had heard in the black speakeasies and dives where he first bused tables and later visited as a dashing young writer on the make. One of the stars of the Harlem Renaissance, Hughes made his career by explaining the black vernacular to a white audience. He trolled through the cigarette-heavy air of Harlem jam sessions, pointing out the "real" joy and the "real" pain of the black experience to white patrons and admirers such as Carl Van Vechten and Charlotte Osgood Mason, who insisted he call her "Godmother."

And it is that Hughes—the race man with flair, the translator of blackness—whom "Little Ham: A Harlem Jazzical" (at the John Houseman) not only celebrates but emulates. First produced at the Hudson Guild Theatre last year, "Little Ham" is adapted from a Langston Hughes play of the same title. (Ever productive, Hughes wrote twenty plays and a handful of musicals and opera librettos, the most well regarded of which is "Street Scene," for which Kurt Weill provided the music.) Set in Harlem in 1936, "Little Ham" takes us back to an idealized Harlem Renaissance, when stockings were rolled down and hips thrust out. (We see little of the real Harlem of 1936—a neighborhood in transition, where the shimmy and the lowdown were being replaced by reefer and jazz, and the darker explorations of race and class produced by writers such as Claude McKay and Nella Larsen did a lot more than admire Lena Horne's feathers.) The show opens with a rousing number meant to chase those historical blues away. We're in Miss Lucille's shop, where the locals come for a bit of neighborhood gossip and to play the dozens. They're stock characters, mostly: Lucille (Cheryl Alexander) is strong and brassy; her husband, Leroy (Lee Summers), is weak and baffled; Mrs. Dobson (Venida Evans), a Bible-thumping old lady, doesn't mind fooling around on the Lord when it comes to making a dollar. Together they sing, dance, and "mess around," and in general imagine what life would be like if they weren't poor and black and could take the High Road to Easy Street.

A central figure in all this jive is the local Lothario—Hamlet Hitchcock Jones (André Garner), or Little Ham, for short. As bright as a penny and nearly as worthless, the former shoeshine boy seems concerned mainly with exercising his charm over the ladies. Still, his heart belongs to one woman only: Miss Tiny Lee (Monica L. Patton), who runs the local beauty salon. Miss Tiny is an "uplift" lady, who wants more than chump change out of life. She sings:

True he knows his mind
But he's just plain blind
If he thinks that I'm inclined to take a fall
He's not my kind at all!

This presents a dilemma for Ham: how can he become respectable and win the love he wants if he's equally attracted to the life he knows—which involves making it on the streets? He certainly won't be encouraged to make the right decision by the white characters who enter the scene: Louie (the Nail) Mahoney (Richard Vida) and his strong-arm, Rushmore (Jerry Gallagher). They're crooks—the truly dark forces from the outside world—who prey on Little Ham's greed by enlisting him as a go-between for the black-run numbers racket and its "downtown" mob partners, who are looking to take over. (That's just the way white folks are: you get a nice little illegal business going, and before you know it they're edging their way in.) How can Little Ham become the man he means to be (or the man Hughes, the Marcus Garvey of iambic pentameter, needed him to be) if he doesn't have the internal resources to defend himself against white temptation? By accepting Louie's deal, he forfeits, for a time, his self-respect and the love of a decent woman. But, Hughes being Hughes, Little Ham makes it out from down under, singing and dancing his way back to blackness and the warm bosom of the community, which learns to forgive him.

Despite the grindingly predictable plot, the actors perform with vitality and charm. Brenda Braxton is especially fine as Sugar Lou Bird, Louie's vain and somewhat lost showgirl consort. But it's the brilliant Joe Wilson, Jr., as Jimmy, Sugar Lou Bird's gay walker, dresser, and conscience, who runs away with the show. Wilson knows a thing or two about how to escape the triteness of "Little Ham." Small but powerfully built, he resembles the young Hughes in complexion, and pathos and joy flash in his large liquid eyes. Hughes may have based the character of Jimmy on Richard Bruce Nugent, the Harlem Renaissance's openly gay writer, for whom the term "African Queen" may well have been coined, and the author of the classic Ronald Firbank-esque story "Smoke, Lilies, and Jade." But the character has more to do with Hughes himself, and with his confusion over his own identity, split between his roles as a spokesman for blackness and as a man who covered the waterfront. Jimmy wants Sugar Lou Bird to fly away—from the crude Louie, and toward the stardom that is her due and his as well, since she is, to some extent, his creation. He coaches her on nearly everything, including how she should leave Louie. In "No!," he advises, "No! You can say it with your eyes / No! You can say it with your thighs / No! He can try it on for size." Wilson not only invests the song with a frenetic charm—he's trying to persuade the birdbrain he loves to have a thought—he makes us feel his desperation when she can't. He puts up with her view of him as the local "snowflake," the ghetto pansy, as it were, because he knows that without her he'd end up as just another lonely queen—a theatrical convention as old as Salome—flipping through his former diva's scrapbooks, searching for himself in the background.

The actors in "Little Ham" perform with vitality. Photograph by Chris Callis.

Wilson uses his ease of expression and his barely concealed rage to fight the hammy conventions of Dan Owens's script, which seems to end each line with an imagined laugh track. The book is not improved by Eric Riley's pandering direction, which borrows liberally from black revues ranging from "Bubbling Brown Sugar" to "Smokey Joe's Café." Wilson shows us what a complex writer Hughes could be. But it's unfortunate that one has to wade through corny productions like "Little Ham" in order to find the voice that was expressed so clearly, for instance, in Hughes's 1934 story collection "The Ways of White Folks." The producer of "Little Ham"—Eric Krebs, who spent seventeen years trying to bring the show to Broadway—probably has a hit on his hands, but haven't we had enough of this stuff? Wouldn't it be a more worthwhile venture to put aside the stock characters and investigate the fictional ones? Think of Cora, for instance, the maid in his fascinating story "Cora Unashamed," or Clorinda, from the poem "Beale Street Love" ("Love / Is a brown man's fist / With hard knuckles / Crushing the lips, / Blackening the eyes,— / Hit me again, / Says Clorinda"). An evening with Hughes and his most realized creations wouldn't be too much of a financial risk. Everybody knows and loves Langston. The United States Postal Service even put him on a stamp. ♦

THE CURRENT CINEMA

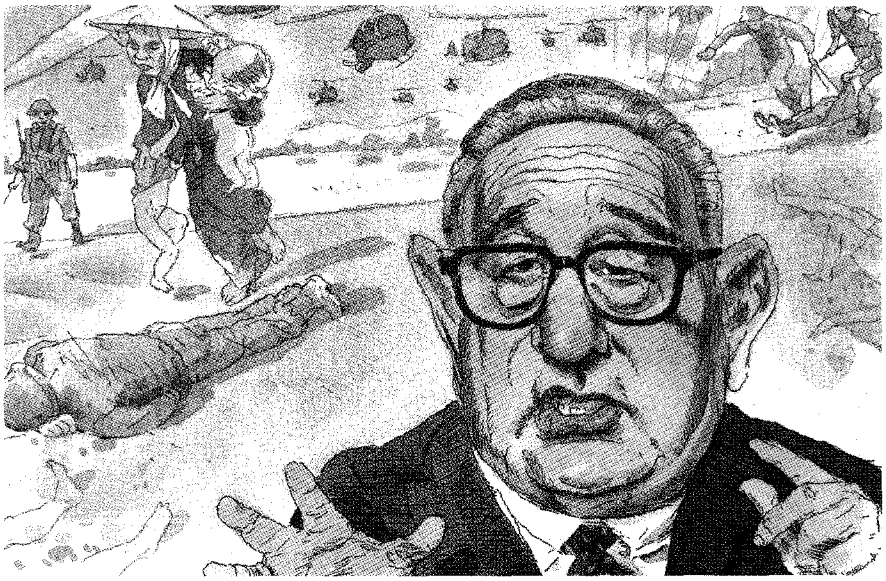
SECRETS

"The Trials of Henry Kissinger" and "Bloody Sunday."

BY DAVID DENBY

At the beginning of the documentary "The Trials of Henry Kissinger," the then national-security adviser to Richard Nixon grins broadly, his eyes shining behind the dark-framed glasses that became his signature. In his late forties, the statesman-professor has the bulk and the stiffness, but not the gloom, of a homely man; his smile exudes a sensual enjoyment of power which even a child would have noticed. When Kissinger ascends to the office of Secretary of State, in 1973, he glows like a newlywed. One of the many remarkable sights in the film, which was funded by the BBC and will be shown at Film Forum through October 8th, is the way that, in later years, Kissinger's bowlike lower lip hardens into an angry horizontal whenever anyone asks him a hostile question. The film is an exposé of the corrosiveness of power; it claims that the retired diplomat, now a seventy-nine-year-old businessman, has a lot to be defensive about, that his enjoyment of power was not an innocent pleasure but a vice. "Trials," which premièred on British television last March, is an eighty-minute response to the most hostile question of all: At a time when Slobodan Milosevic and Augusto Pinochet have been arrested for crimes against humanity, shouldn't Kissinger also be held legally accountable for what his policies led to in Cambodia, in Chile, and in East Timor? Several former American officials, including Roger Morris, who worked under Kissinger at the National Security Council, think so, as do a number of American and British jurists and journalists.

The complaints against Kissinger have been around in one form or another for three decades. What precipitated the production of the film was the publication, in 2001, of Christopher Hitchens's "The Trial of Henry Kissinger," a book based on his two-part article in *Harper's*. In the documentary, Hitchens says of Kissinger, "I think he's a war criminal; I think he's a liar; I think he's responsible for kidnapping, for murder." Hitchens is notoriously fond of moral melodrama, but his charges are reinforced by the sombre British journalist William Shawcross, the author of "Sideshow" (an account of the American incursion into Cambodia), and by Seymour M. Hersh, who marvels at Kissinger's ability, year after year, to escape retribution. For Hersh, Kissinger is the big fish who has always wriggled out of the net. The essence of the journalists' complaints is that Kissinger was repeatedly indifferent to human suffering and democratic procedure during a long period of overzealous devotion to Cold War strategy; and that, personally, he was duplicitous and ruthless right from the beginning of his government career. In interviews with Kissinger's former aide Daniel Davidson and others, the film recounts how, in the fall of 1968, when the outgoing President, Lyndon Johnson, and the Democratic candidate, Vice-President Hubert Humphrey, were sponsoring peace negotiations with the North Vietnamese, Kissinger served as an unofficial adviser to the American negotiators. At the same time, however, he was sending information to Humphrey's opponent, Richard Nixon, a man he hated, whereupon Nixon used his own channels to convince President Nguyen Van Thieu, of South Vietnam, that the Republicans could get him a better deal. Three days before the American election, Thieu withdrew his approval from the developing peace plan, at which point the talks collapsed. Humphrey was discredited, Nixon was narrowly elected, and Kissinger, who until then had worked for Nelson Rockefeller, was made national-security adviser. Obsessed with American "credibility," Kissinger and Nixon secretly expanded the war into Cambodia. Four years passed from the time of Nixon's Inauguration, and another twenty thousand Americans and untold Vietnamese and Cambodians died before Kissinger worked out a peace deal with North Vietnam, which was almost identical to the arrangement he had helped sabotage in 1968.


A new film asks if the former Secretary of State should be tried for war crimes.

JOHN CUNEO

This is serious stuff, and there's much more in a similar vein, a lot of which might be unfamiliar to younger audiences. I wish, however, that Eugene Jarecki and Alex Gibney, who wrote, directed, and produced "Trials," had gone beyond the usual mosaic style of film journalism, the brisk summary in which short interview and newsreel fragments are joined together with voice-over narration. This method of pointed assemblage is no doubt the best way to convey a great deal of information quickly, and several of the episodes are both skillful and detailed—the investigation, for instance, into American complicity, in 1975, in the genocidal campaign of Indonesian military forces in East Timor. But is the method equal to the gravity and complexity of the subject? Jarecki and Gibney devote some time to Kissinger's farcical career as a "swinger," but they gloss over his achievements in playing off the Soviet Union and China against each other and thereby hastening the American victory in the Cold War—the cause for which, after all, Kissinger's more dubious actions were taken. I understand the desire to cut through complications and ambivalence, but the subject demands something besides outrage; it needs the scale and thoughtfulness of a Marcel Ophuls documentary, in which a given case is made all the more convincing by the filmmaker's patiently overcoming objections to it, both large and small. Kissinger declined to speak with the filmmakers, but Alexander Haig, his former aide and defender, was interviewed, and he is frequently cut off by the editors in mid-sentence. Haig's remarks strike me as both cynical and evasive, but I would like to hear him complete his thoughts. And, if Kissinger refused to coöperate, couldn't the filmmakers have turned to his memoirs for his defense of various actions? The movie feels not only like a trial but like a trial in absentia.

The subject of Henry Kissinger's alleged criminality is deeply unpleasant, and, as the movie began, I felt a wave of distaste—no, not these old controversies once again. The suggestion of a legal proceeding seemed a mere fantasy. And yet the BBC report, whatever its imperfections, is just good enough to get under your skin. If you absorb the rapid flow of claims, you may think, There's enough documented information here to make a trial plausible. And the film forces Americans, willy-nilly, to confront elements in our history which threaten to resurface in the present. That power is corrosive is hardly news. And perhaps it's not news that men in power will claim that their actions are motivated by serious threats to America which they are not quite prepared to make public. Yet the question remains: In a democratic society, how can a statesman be effective without the practice of subterfuge? If the answer is "He can't," it would be nice to have Kissinger explain why.

"Bloody Sunday" is a stunning re-creation of events that took place in 1972, in Londonderry, Northern Ireland, when British paratroopers, trying to restore order after a particularly unruly period, opened fire on a peaceful demonstration and fourteen unarmed Irish Catholic civil-rights protesters died. The British writer-director Paul Greengrass uses a handheld camera that tilts, skitters, and pitches about madly as it makes its way among the seething Irish or the angry and frightened British soldiers. The actors are caught on the run, saying their lines quickly and harshly as they pass in and out of rooms or move through the crowds, which come together, break, and re-form like foam on a beach. It's possible that no one since the Russian silent-film directors Eisenstein and Pudovkin has created crowd scenes as volatile as these. Greengrass has, in effect, staged a cinéma-vérité documentary account of the incident, throwing us into the middle of events without blocking out scenes for clarity and emphasis. Yet the main outlines are clear. As Greengrass tells it, the British were in a punitive and unjust mood, and the Irish Protestant leader Ivan Cooper (James Nesbitt), a member of Parliament who revered Martin Luther King, Jr., and the strategy of nonviolence, attempted to lead a peaceful protest. When the British began shooting, claiming that they were being fired on by I.R.A. gunmen (the movie fudges the issue of whether that was the case), Nesbitt could do nothing to control the situation. The movie is his tragedy—the tragedy of innocence. For the viewer, the miracle of "Bloody Sunday" is that firm moral judgment can exist side by side with a wild and bitter exhilaration in the sheer physicality of violence. ♦

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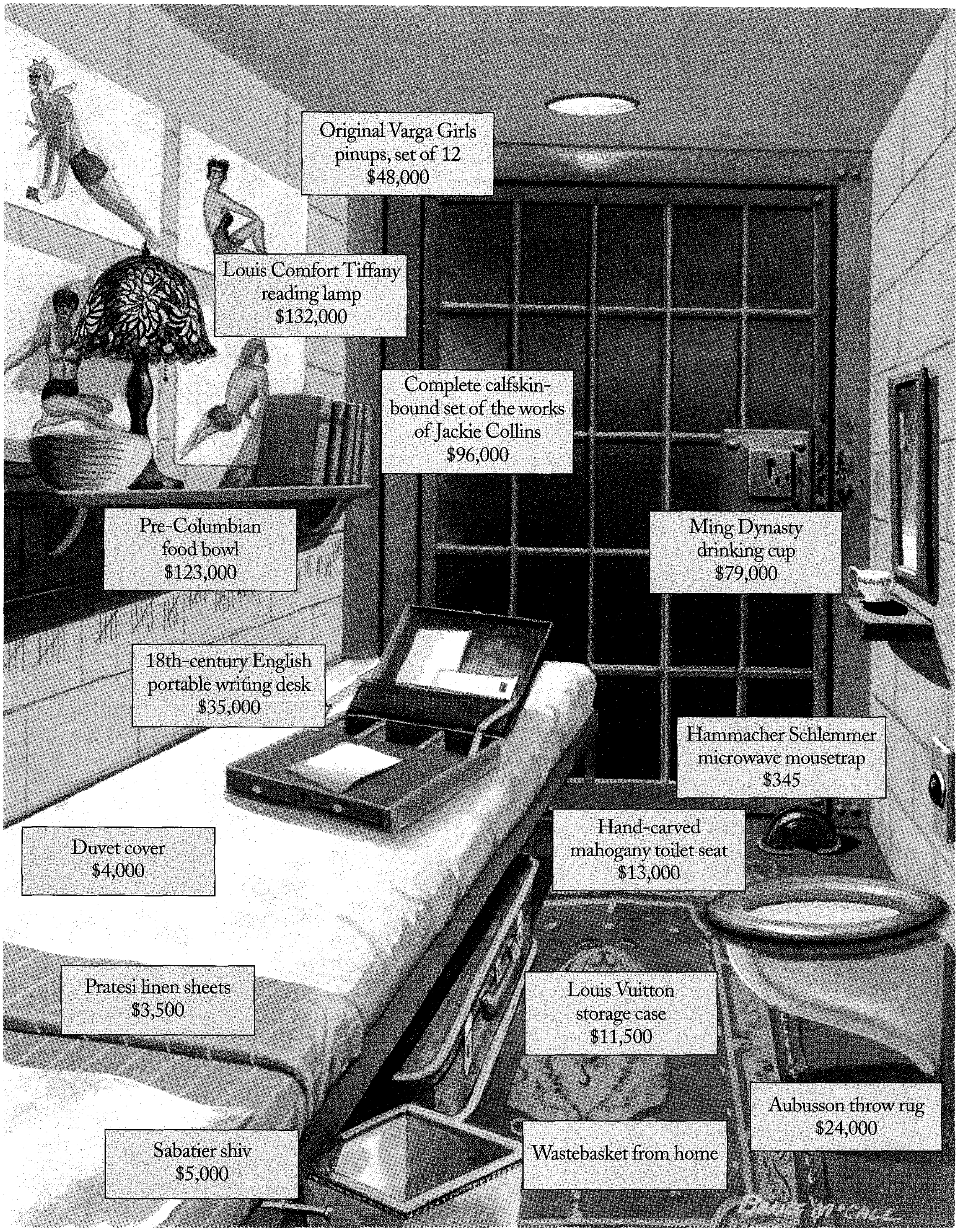

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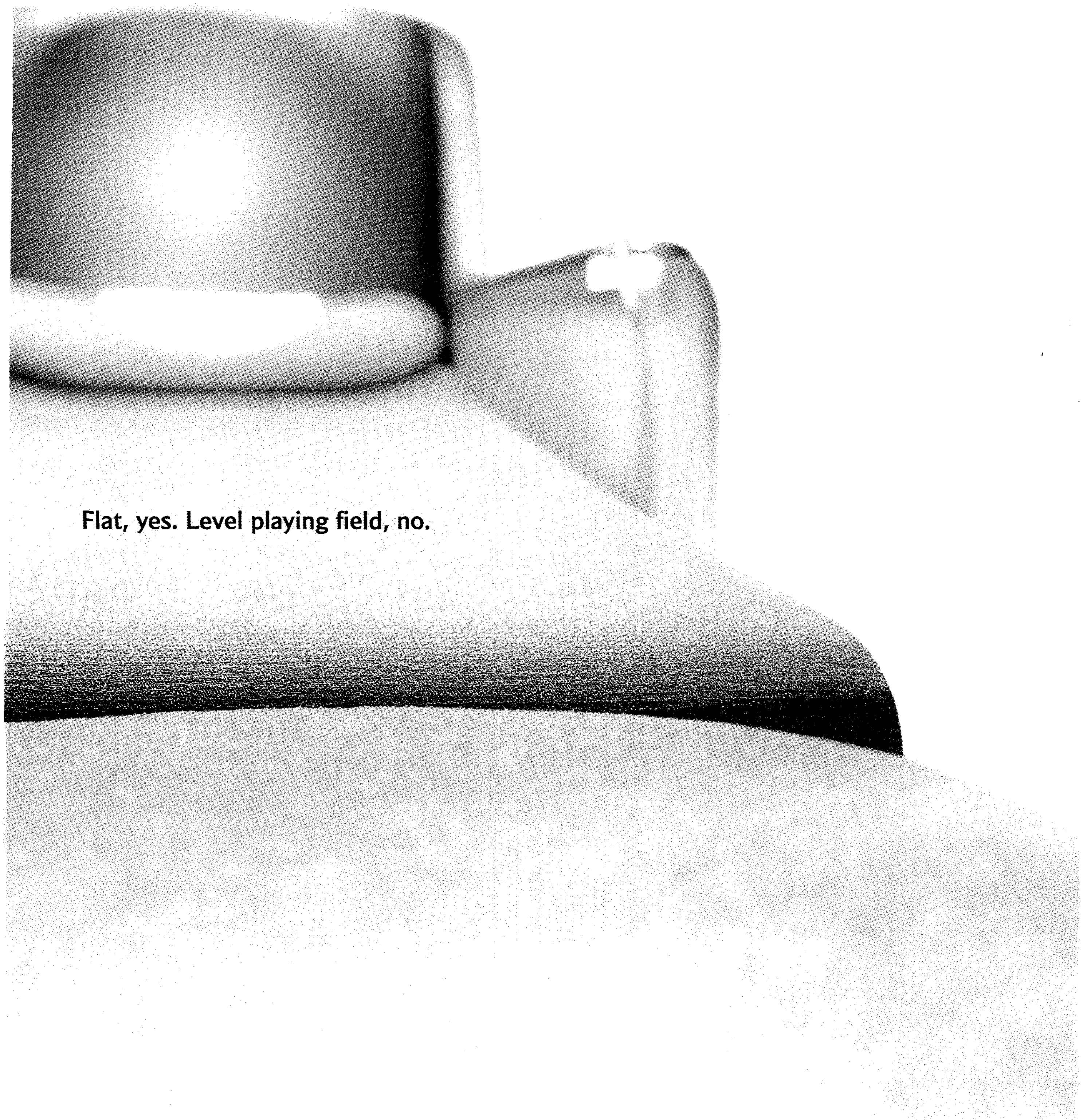
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